STORIES OF THE CHINESE PEOPLE'S VOLUNTEERS

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Foreword

This is a collection of stories about the heroic deeds of the Chinese People's Volunteers who fought in Korea. To help readers understand the contents of this book, we shall first give a brief account of how the Chinese people started the campaign to resist U.S. aggression and aid Korea.

On June 25, 1950, the U.S. imperialists launched a war of aggression against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and at the same time sent the U.S. Seventh Fleet to China's territorial waters off Taiwan, thus interfering by arms in the liberation of the island by the Chinese people. The U.S. aeroplanes repeatedly intruded into the territorial air of Northeast China, killing the Chinese people and destroying their homes, while the naval vessels of the U.S. aggressive forces in Korea violated China's rights of navigation and opened fire on Chinese merchant ships on the high seas. Following their occupation of Seoul, the U.S. aggressive forces, heedless of China's warnings, crossed the 38th Parallel in October of the same year and came near China's northeastern frontier, thereby seriously menacing the safety of our country. The American aggressors in Korea lost every shred of humanity and stopped at nothing in their wholesale massacres. They openly expressed their intention of "exterminating the North Koreans." In places under their occupation, the American butchers killed the Korean people in large numbers. Whole families died at their brutal hands; not even old men, children or women with babies at their breasts having any chance of survival. As a result of round-the-clock bombings in North Korea by American planes, houses, hospitals, schools, churches and consumer goods factories were all levelled to the ground,

cities and towns reduced to ruins, and millions of people rendered homeless. In the face of such atrocities, the Chinese people naturally could not stand idly by. Korea is our next-door neighbour. Facts have proved that American aggression against Korea was aimed at aggression against China as the next step. The Chinese proverb aptly says: "With lips gone, the teeth are exposed to cold; with gates crashed, the halls are imperilled." To defend their motherland, to prevent the aggressive war from spreading to their own territory, the Chinese people had no choice but to go to the aid of the Korean people. For this purpose they sent the Chinese People's Volunteers — the finest sons and daughters of China — to Korea to fight shoulder to shoulder with the Korean People's Army against the American aggressors. After 37 months of bitter fighting, a great victory was won, and the American aggressors were forced to sign the Armistice Agreement on July 27, 1953.

The victory of the Korean and Chinese peoples in their fight against aggression was achieved at a time when they were far inferior to their enemy in military equipment. Besides forcing 15 other satellite nations to join the war, the U.S. invaders mobilized one-third of their army, one-fifth of their air force and the greater part of their navy to form the main force in the war of aggression against Korea, put the entire national economy on a war-time basis, and devoted large quantities of military materials to the war. But the Korean and Chinese peoples' forces scored brilliant victories in spite of inferior equipment. In 37 months of fighting, more than 1,090,000 enemy troops were killed, wounded or captured, of whom over 390,000 were U.S. troops; more than 12,200 enemy planes were brought down or damaged; 257 enemy warships and vessels of various types were sunk or put out of action; in addition inestimable war *matériel* was destroyed or captured. With such glorious victories and heroic deeds, the Korean People's Army and the Chinese People's Volunteers have revealed a great truth to the world: The American aggressors can be defeated while the people fighting for the honour and independence of their motherland are invincible.

In this collection are brought together 11 narratives, each telling of the heroic feats of a fighter of the Chinese People's Volunteers: the story of Squad Leader Lei Pao-shen, who led his men in destroying 11 American tanks without incurring any casualty among his squad; of Liu Kuang-tse, who captured 63 enemy soldiers single-handed; of airman Chang Chi-hui, who killed U.S. "ace" pilot G. A. Davis in an air battle; and of fine battalion and company commanders and scouting heroes who made surprise attacks on enemy positions. In their operations, all these heroes evinced unequalled bravery and unshakable confidence in their victory. In the most critical moments the one thing paramount in their minds was how to win the war and wipe out the enemy. In whatever they did they exercised a high degree of creativeness and initiative. They fought not only with boundless courage but also with infinite wisdom. There was close-knit solidarity and great fraternity between these heroes and their comrades.

The valiant deeds of these heroes graphically demonstrate that gone for ever is the age when the colonialists could occupy any nation in the East just by mounting a few guns on the coast, and that today any aggression by the imperialists can be smashed by the mighty force of the people.

Finally it must be pointed out that not all the heroes of the Chinese People's Volunteers have been featured in this book. During the fighting which lasted two years and nine months more than 300,000 war heroes, model fighters and meritorious soldiers emerged from the Chinese People's Volunteers. It would obviously be impossible to present all of them within the covers of one volume such as this.

AN EAGLE AT THE FIRING-LINE

LIU CHAO-JUNG

Chang Lan-ting, a native of Lichin County, Shantung Province, was born in 1925. He joined the Chinese People's Liberation Army in September 1945, became a member of the Communist Party of China in January 1946, and joined the Chinese People's Volunteers in October 1950. He successively held the ranks of squad leader, platoon leader, company commander and reconnaissance party leader. For his brave and ingenious fulfilment of reconnaissance tasks in the First, Third and Fourth Campaigns, the CPV Command decided, on November 12, 1952, to give him a special-class merit and the title of Hero of the Second Class. The Standing Committee of the Supreme People's Assembly of the Korean Democratic People's Republic awarded him, on different occasions, an Order of Honoured Fighter, First Class, and an Order of Military Merit.

— EDITOR

In the autumn of 1952, I went to the front positions to visit the reconnaissance party of a division. As I came near a tunnel, I heard a sonorous voice:

"For us scouts, it is more important to capture enemy soldiers alive than to kill them. When you manoeuvre in the enemy positions, you must be daring and composed. You should keep your eyes and ears open all the time and in all

directions, and act as the occasion requires. You must also be able to take advantage of the enemy's weaknesses. . . ."

It was the leader Chang Lan-ting's voice; I could not help but quicken my pace.

Chang was sitting on a bed-board close to the entrance of the tunnel. Seeing me, he stood up of a sudden and, smiling broadly, said, "Ah, Comrade Reporter, you have come at the right moment! Come and sit here." Before I could do so, he pointed to the opposite side and remarked humorously, "Have you ever heard of such a thing? He killed 'a string' of puppet soldiers!"[1]

I sat down beside him. I looked round and saw a scout with bowed head sitting on an empty wooden box which had apparently been used for packing tin cans.

Chang Lan-ting then told me this strange story — the previous night, the men of our 2nd Platoon had crept to enemy positions to lay snares for enemy soldiers. In the dim moonlight, nine blackish figures were coming towards them. The scouts were highly delighted, thinking: "In order to capture a 'tongue,'[2] we have been lying in ambush in vain for several nights. Now at last our chance has come." When the victims were about to walk into the ambush, all the scouts held their breath, fearing the enemy might discover them and run away. But this scout, who had been newly transferred to our group, jumped up from the ground, and threw out two hand-grenades recklessly. Then he fired his automatic rifle, dashed forward, seized hold of an enemy soldier, anxious to drag him back. But, however hard he tried, he could not pull away his victim. Originally a puppet officer had tied all these fellows together one by one with an electric wire! Thus this string of soldiers were all shot and fell to the ground. Only one of them seemed not too badly wounded. The scouts had a hard time cutting him free of the wire tied around his body. But when they carried him back, he was stone dead.

[1]Referring to Syngman Rhee's troops.

[2]Referring to captives capable of giving information.

When Chang Lan-ting finished his story, he held out his hands with palms upwards, and said:

"These men had come our way, but we did not capture them alive with their 'tongues'; is this what a scout should do?"

"I thought that by throwing the enemy into a panic, I would surely catch one alive," the reckless scout muttered. "Who would have known that they were tied together? We have never seen such 'patrols.' . . ."

Chang Lan-ting suddenly stood up and looked at him with flashing eyes:

"To be a scout, you should be like an eagle: Your eyes should be sharp, don't you see? Just think, why didn't you wait till the enemy came nearer and then make a catch?"

"I was too impatient for success!"

Chang Lan-ting went to the scout and, patting him on the shoulder, said, "So you know your defect! All right, be cleverer next time; fire at the right moment! Now, go back to your squad."

The scout stood at attention and saluted him, and then turned round and walked out of the tunnel.

After the scout left, we again sat down together on the bed-board. We had not seen each other for over a year, but his tall figure, his long face, his thin eyebrows and his sharp, bright eyes had not changed. Only his face had become thinner, and the wrinkles seemed deeper. His leg had been wounded in several places by barbed wire and brambles, and the bloodstains had become dark. The lower part of his leg was swollen, so that when he sat on the bed-board he had to lay his leg flat.

Looking at his swollen leg I said, "You ought to take a rest."

"Take a rest? How can I take a rest? The head of the reconnaissance department and the political instructor have always been saying to me too: 'Your leg won't do! You should take a few days' rest.' I well understand their good will.

But enemy conditions are changing every day; it is necessary for us scouts to keep track of them. If I go to the rear for a rest just because I have some trouble with my leg, how could I bear to stay there? Besides, all my comrades are here, and I can't tear myself away from them. And then. . . ." He took out more than ten letters from under his pillow and placed them before me: "Look at these letters! They are from dear friends in our motherland. These are from wounded comrades who wrote while they were convalescing. In every letter are these words: 'We hope you will gain more victories, and wipe out more enemy troops.' Do you really think that I should take a rest? . . ."

"But you've got a wounded leg . . ." I interrupted.

Before I could finish my sentence, he raised up his swollen leg and said all smiles, "This is nothing. If I don't use it to run about in the enemy positions, or get it soaked in water, it may hurt me all the more!"

He spoke with much light-heartedness, and did not in the least seem to mind the wound. I changed the topic of our conversation, and we had a heart-to-heart chat about the reconnaissance party, and about himself — about his present assignments and his past fighting experiences. What I relate here is how marvellously he fulfilled his reconnaissance tasks when he first came to Korea at the very time the enemy troops were frantically advancing northward, and how he was given a special-class merit and won the title of Hero of the Second Class.

It was the afternoon of November 12, 1950. The sun was casting its oblique rays on the hillsides. The scouts who were taking a rest in the damp pine grove all got up to adjust their shoe-strings and tie up the ends of their trousers — knowing that as soon as it grew dark, there would be assignments according to the usual practice.

Just then, Regimental Commander Chiang came walking towards the pine grove. The scouts, wide-eyed, straightened themselves up. All understood: "There must be some important assignment; otherwise, why does the regimental commander come to the platoon at this time of day?"

The regimental commander walked towards them and greeted them all smiles, "Good afternoon, comrades! You must be having a hard time of it!"

"Not at all," the scouts replied loudly.

"Comrades, I'm going to give you an assignment today. You all know that our troops have been defending the north bank of the Taedong River and the Tokchon front for five or six days. But we haven't got enough information about the enemy we are facing. Tonight, before twelve o'clock, you must bring back a 'tongue.'"

To catch a "tongue" on the battlefield is an important means by which the command can get information about the enemy. The scouts could see from the regimental commander's face that the task of catching a "tongue" was very urgent, and that evidently a new attack on the enemy was being prepared. What exciting news this was!

Seeing the smiles of the scouts, Chang Lan-ting, then leader of the reconnaissance platoon, walked up to the regimental commander with big strides and said, "Be assured, Regimental Commander! We are sure to deliver a 'tongue'!"

"Look, Comrade Chang Lan-ting!" The regimental commander broke off a pine twig and, squatting beside the pine, began to draw on the ground with it. "Tonight we'll throw three detachments deep into the enemy's rear. You shall lead one squad; you are to walk through the wasteland in front of our positions, cross a dry river, and then make a detour around the enemy's front positions and penetrate into Chongnyong-ni. We calculate that you will find some enemy troops right there."

"Yes, there are; we have observed them several times."

"Though it is only six *li*[1] from here to Chongnyong-ni, it is difficult to walk in the dark, and it's not easy to steal into the enemy positions. . . ."

[1]One *li* is equal to about one-third of a mile.

"Regimental Commander! Every scout has a pair of night-eyes and a couple of fast legs. If the enemy discover us, we'll fight hard and capture boldly. We'll be sure to fulfil our task in time!"

"That's good!" Then after a short pause, the regimental commander said, "This is the first time you undertake such a task. You should be brave and cautious, and judge cool-headedly whatever happens. But come what may . . ." the regimental commander spoke with emphasis, "you must fulfil your task!"

"Regimental Commander, we assure you that the task will be fulfilled!"

"That's capital! I'll be waiting for news of your victory."

Came the evening. Darkness covered the hills and fields. There was a lull after a hot battle; and only intermittent shots of cannon and bursts of machine-gun fire were heard.

Chang Lan-ting with his 6th Squad groped under cover of the night towards the enemy positions. They quickly passed the wasteland and came to the small river.

Suddenly some flashes of light appeared on the hill-top on the south bank of the river, and the whistling cold wind carried the indistinct sounds of speech to them.

"Come on," Chang Lan-ting, squatting on the river bank, whispered to the scouts behind him. The scouts immediately came up to him. "On the hill before us are the enemy. We must pass their positions quietly and quickly, and from first to last we must keep in contact with each other. Now, follow me!"

Chang Lan-ting and his scouts crossed the dry rivulet in big strides and quietly advanced towards Chongnyong-ni.

They had not walked far before they saw the lights of Chongnyong-ni. Chang Lan-ting signalled with his hand to stop and, lowering his voice, said to his men:

"The enemy must be in Chongnyong-ni; the lights are still on. Get ready! The covering group shall stay outside the village to give us cover, while the rest shall go into the village

with me. We shall fight fiercely and capture boldly, and shall get away as soon as we have made a catch."

They ran towards the houses with lights. How strange! The village was all quiet; not a breath of sound. On entering the village, they did not find a soul.

"The lights are still on. The enemy can't be far away. If not in the village, they must be somewhere around the river bridge." So thinking, Chang continued to steal southward with his men, straight towards the Taedong River bridge.

Suddenly the leader of the 6th Squad came up to him and whispered in his ear, "Platoon Leader, there is sound in the southwest corner; I think the enemy soldiers are digging defences there."

Chang Lan-ting turned round and, motioning again with his hand in the dark, whispered, "You fellows lie down on both sides of the highway. I'll go first to find out about the lay of the land and the roads, and what the enemy soldiers are doing." So saying, he took his Mauser in hand and crept stealthily towards the sound.

He groped his way to the bottom of a bluff, and saw two enemy soldiers looming up on the ridge; they were digging defences. From behind the embankment came a pucha-pucha sound. Judging from the volume, there must be no less than half a squad of soldiers at work.

What a good opportunity this was! But his men were 20 or 30 steps away; if he went back to bring them here, the enemy might discover them and all would be undone. This was a critical moment; though he was alone, he had to deal with these foes. But how? It would be hard to catch two men at one time. He had better kill the one in the front first, and then taking advantage of the situation catch the one behind. With this decision in mind, he continued to grope forward stealthily.

A mass of dark clouds floated by, and some stars appeared in the sky. Chang Lan-ting was only four or five metres from the enemy. Suddenly a fellow in a white cape discovered

Chang Lan-ting; he quickly stooped to take up the automatic rifle at his side. At this very moment Chang Lan-ting dashed forward, jumped up on the bluff, and killed the man in the front with his gun. Then, like a ferocious tiger, he leaped forward and, seizing the soldier in the white cape by the collar, kicked the rifle out of his hand, gave a twist to his collar and dragged his enemy down.

The captured soldier, who was taller and stouter than Chang Lan-ting, tried hard to stiffen his neck and stand up. But Chang pressed him down on to the ground with all his might. The fellow, after struggling three times, finally got up, and in his turn tried to seize Chang's neck. Chang was both anxious and furious, and would have liked very much to shoot the man dead. But his task was to catch an enemy alive. And if he delayed for another moment, the enemy soldiers behind the bluff would come, and things would be too hot for him. So he grasped the back of his opponent's collar tightly, and strangled him with all his might. His victim, as if hanged on the gallows, could scarcely breathe; he swung his arms and kicked his legs. At this critical moment, the leader of the 6th Squad ran up with a group of men who, lifting up the prisoner, sped away as fast as they could. The enemy soldiers behind the bluff in the meantime had become panicky; they fired at random. When they reached the top of the bluff, the scouts were already 30 or 40 metres away.

It was pitch dark, and the way was rugged. The scouts who were carrying the prisoner ran so fast that they fell into a ditch. The prisoner, frightened to death, lay on the ground like a corpse, not moving a muscle. Chang Lan-ting at once gave the order:

"Men of the covering group shall give cover while the rest carry the prisoner away, double quick!"

At once, some of the men took the prisoner by the legs, others grasped his arms, and away they went with him over the hill and across the rivulet. They ran two or three *li* at a stretch, before stopping to take a rest.

The prisoner stood up the minute he was laid on the ground. One of the scouts cried with glee:

"Aha! He is alive!"

Chang Lan-ting could not help laughing: "No bullet has hit him; how can he be dead? He was just frightened out of his wits a moment ago."

They took the "tongue" to the regimental headquarters. The comrades there surrounded Chang Lan-ting and the scouts, firing questions:

"Platoon Leader Chang, where did you catch him?"

"Hey, it's only six o'clock; still six hours before twelve. You sure do work fast!"

Chang Lan-ting broke out into a sweat; beads of perspiration as big as beans ran down his face. He stood there, smiling with reserve, not knowing how to answer. The scouts, however, gave a vivid description of the incident gesticulating profusely:

"It's really not easy to make a catch! Our platoon leader got this one out of a wolves' lair. But listen!"

Yes, sharp gunfire and roaring cannon were heard in the direction of Chongnyong-ni. The enemy troops were waging a bitter battle with the boundless dark night!

* * *

On January 1, 1951, the Chinese People's Volunteers had already broken through what MacArthur had boasted was the lifeline of defence, the 38th Parallel, and were marching toward Seoul.

On the evening of January 2, the scouts were ordered to make a thrust into the midst of the routed enemy in order to intercept them and to give the main force a good chance to deal the blow of annihilation. The mission was an arduous one, for the enemy could easily escape in trucks while the scouts had to pursue them on foot along a by-road. At midnight when they were about to reach Sunaksan Mountain north of Uijongbu on the western front, the swift footsteps

of Chang Lan-ting were brought to a sudden halt. The highway was blocked by a dense thicket of barbed wire. The network stretched across the highway and then ran up zigzagging along precipitous rocks on both sides; consequently the main line of communication was cut off.

Chang Lan-ting looked about from side to side. As the summit of the mountain was wrapped in deep grey, he could not find out where both ends of the wire lay. He examined the wires closely, pressing his foot against them; how firmly and compactly interwoven they were. There was no way of climbing over the net, nor going round it, and they had not brought along any tools for cutting wire. This indeed was a hard nut to crack.

Not far away from the eastern side came the rumble of cannon fire and bombardment from enemy planes. Chang raised his head to look round. Bathed in the pale moonlight, the summit was enveloped in complete silence. Knitting his eyebrows tightly, he formed his own private judgement on the situation: "The summit may be occupied by enemy troops, who at any rate will not have thought that we have arrived here so quickly. We must now contrive some way to force an opening through the net of barbed wire without disturbing the enemy on the summit." Then he said abruptly to a scout by his side:

"Fetch a canister of dynamite."

He got it and then the scout prepared to do the dynamiting. Chang Lan-ting motioned with his right hand and said in a low voice, "No hurry!"

On seeing the platoon leader absorbed in thought and observation, the scout asked, "Shall we go around the mountain?"

"No," he said, pointing toward the summit, "undoubtedly we can climb over the mountain by taking that narrow path. If our main force in the rear were to go around the mountain, the enemy would have fled long ago. They set up this net

of barbed wire just in order to prevent us from making a hot pursuit."

"What is to be done then?"

"Blow it up! We'll do so at the moment when enemy planes are dropping bombs."

"Dynamiting sends up a fiery flash which the enemy soldiers are bound to see."

"No need for worry. Don't you see the flames on the eastern side? At the precise moment when enemy bombs and shells are bursting, we'll add to the excitement." Soon after Chang Lan-ting's words, a spurt of fire flashed across the highway and a breach was made in the barbed wire network.

Chang Lan-ting judged by now that there must be enemy troops in front and a battle would soon be fought. Accordingly, he ordered the vanguard unit to penetrate the pass between two mountains swiftly and advance on the highway with fleet steps. Presently, a village loomed before them in the dark, close by the foot of the mountain, with a very steep river bank on the right while the highway along the bank went round the village and then extended straight toward the south.

As the vanguards stealthily groped their way to the village entrance, they caught a glimpse of a black shadow in front. Judging it to be the enemy's sentinel, they were on the point of dashing forward to capture him alive. But when they were only a few paces away, the sentinel became aware of their approach. "Bang," with one shot from his gun, he turned and fled. The men followed hard at his heels in hot pursuit.

They failed to capture the sentinel, whose gun report must have awakened the enemy. So the vanguards would have to strike boldly into their midst and taking advantage of the confusion crush the enemy. The time was so urgent, there was no time for hesitation. Chang Lan-ting, after consulting

briefly with staff officer Tsao Yu-chen, promptly issued an order:

"The 5th Squad is to penetrate to the east of the village and intercept those enemy soldiers who may flee eastward, the 6th Squad is to control the northern approach to the village to prevent reinforcements from the mountain. The 4th Squad is to follow me for a violent attack and thrust into the village."

The sentinel in desperation fled into the village, closely followed by our vanguards. When the pursuers saw him about to enter a courtyard, they took aim and shot him dead. Chang Lan-ting, close at the heels of the vanguards, arrived at the entrance of the courtyard. At the gate stood two jeeps, with several electric wires mounted on the outside.

"This is the commanding headquarters. Comrades, let's knock out the enemy's 'brains' first." Turning his head, he shouted and raised his Mauser. At his call the men dashed into the yard, throwing grenade after grenade into the rooms.

It turned out that a battalion of the U.S. 19th Regiment had set up its headquarters in the village. They had been ordered to defend the Sunaksan Mountain area north of Uijongbu against the violent offensive of the Chinese People's Volunteers. They had not dreamed of the extraordinary swiftness of the Volunteers' forced march, relying as they had to on their own legs for locomotion. When they were awakened from their sound slumber, hand-grenades had already burst on their earthen beds.

Chang Lan-ting led the 4th Squad, striking successively into two courtyards. As they dashed over to the third one, the enemy fled in a panic in all directions. Some of them, trousers in hand, ran to and fro in the doorway, not knowing where to make their escape. Others, crawling beneath the cars or flattening themselves in the corners of the room, shot at random. The scouts threw more grenades through the doorway. Those enemy soldiers who were not killed cried like grunting pigs.

On hearing the report of guns in the village, the enemy on the summit knew that the Volunteers had launched an assault. Accordingly they abandoned their blockade of the highway and turned their light and heavy machine-guns on the village in a tremendous broadside. Tracer bullets like salamanders one after another flew into the village, hitting the walls and sending up dusty particles of plaster, and striking sparks of fire from the stones.

The enemy troops in the whole village were now in a great stir and commotion, making desperate sallies towards the east. The entrance of the village was blocked by the 5th Squad. At once a fierce hand-to-hand fight took place. Wei Kuei-shan, though already wounded, was wrestling hard with his adversary; they were rolling back and forth in the deep snow. Chang Peng-ti crushed the skull of an enemy soldier with his gun-stock, and then turned round to grapple with another, wallowing together with him on the snowy ground.

In the midst of a vehement fight at close quarters, Chang Lan-ting led the 4th Squad to press forward from the west in the teeth of a shower of bullets. He shouted in a loud voice:

"Let none of them escape; comrades, catch them alive!"

The scouts encircled their victims. Those American robbers who could find no way to slip off, were so panic-stricken that they raised their trembling hands in surrender. Chang Lan-ting carefully counted the number; altogether 14 men had been captured.

At daybreak, when our troops in the rear came up, the battle in the village had already been concluded. Chang Lan-ting immediately reported the enemy situation to his superiors, and then, with the assistance of these supplementary forces, mopped up a whole battalion of the enemy on the summit.

* * *

At the time when the battle of interception was being waged on the south bank of the Han-gang River, Chang Lan-ting had been promoted to deputy leader of the division's reconnais-

sance party. On the evening of February 14, 1951, he was instructed to lead a squad to penetrate into the rear of the enemy and to ferret out the conditions in Oyaso to the southeast of Kwangju-ri.

With this new mission in hand, Chang Lan-ting set about figuring out the whole thing. Since the enemy had been launching their onsets in the daytime, under cover of aeroplanes and tanks, they were sure to be dead-tired on going back for rest at night. Moreover, they might not expect the Volunteers to be daring enough to make an assault. These were favourable conditions for accomplishing the mission. But how to penetrate into their rear?

If his squad were to make a direct approach, a distance of only about three *li*, they could reach their destination simply by crossing the mountain ridges. But as the enemy troops were entrenched on the summit, it would be impossible to steal through. But if they should take the highway from Seoul to Ichon, go round the zone of the enemy outposts and then march onward, their foe would never discover them. As the plan was made to his satisfaction, he led the squad and set forth.

Swinging along the highway, they covered three or four *li* toward the southeast and came to the place where the broad road veered to the southwest with the enemy positions right on the summits overlooking both sides of the highway. Chang Lan-ting led the scouts silently groping their way forward. Absolute desolation and solitude reigned everywhere except when the northwest wind rustled through the leaves.

They made twists and turns over a dozen *li* when a village, black and indistinct, appeared at the right side. Chang Lan-ting crept along the highway to the south end of the village, and after stationing some sentinels outside, led a vanguard unit back into the village in search of the enemy.

Perfect silence prevailed in the village. He stole cautiously into the first courtyard, and gently drew open the door. A damp and putrid odour came from the room, and no one was

sleeping on the earthen bed. Frowning he wondered: Why not a single soul? As he stepped out of the courtyard to turn westward, a heap of white objects on the ground caught his eye. Feeling around, he took up one of them to look at and found it to be a tin can. Wrapping the head of his flashlight in a handkerchief, he directed it to the ground, which he found to be littered with chicken feathers. Twice he brushed them aside with his hand, and again picked up a tin can to smell. Some enemy troops must have stayed here today, he thought. Had they already gone away? The situation was baffling. In the last two days, the enemy assaults had grown more violent in the daytime. The number of tanks and cannon was greatly increased, and enemy aeroplanes dropped more bombs and napalm bombs. It seemed that the enemy troops were reinforcing themselves and prepared to launch a new attack. . . . So there must be some of them here.

He crept into another courtyard stealthily. As he pulled open the door, a gust of sweaty air blew over his face. With the help of his flashlight, he saw people of both sexes crowded on an earthen bed less than 30 feet in length. He stood by the door, thinking: Some of the enemy must be around. In normal times there wouldn't be so many people packed together on one bed. Their own houses must have been occupied by the intruders. But how many of them, and in which courtyard? He was turning round to go out, when scout Liu Chih-ching in great agitation hurriedly ran up at the entrance, pointing to the western courtyard:

"There are huge boots at that doorway. Most probably some enemy soldiers are sleeping in that room."

"Quick, take me there!" Chang Lan-ting issued his order in a low voice. Mauser in hand, he followed Liu to the west.

The gate to the courtyard was woven out of tree branches. It was closed. Peering in through a chink, he clearly saw a pile of great boots at the door of the south room. Just as Liu Chih-ching stretched out his hand to push the gate, Chang Lan-ting caught hold of his arm and said softly:

"There is no hurry. You must not disturb the enemy." He bent down, taking hold of the gate to move it gently. Aiya! Suddenly a bell tingled overhead. How distinctly it sounded in the quiet night! He quickly felt about the gate and fastened the bell. Originally attached to the neck of an ox, the bell was now used by the enemy to keep guard at the gate.

He stood under the eaves of the south room to have a look at the north one. He considered the layout to be disadvantageous for it was liable to attack both from the front and the back. It would be better to inspect the north room first. If there were no adversaries there, ways could easily be found to clear off those in the south room. He beckoned to Liu Chih-ching to stand guard at the entrance of the south room, and then walked on tiptoe to the doorway of the north one. He gently pushed the door open. A snoring sound like the grunts of a pig issued forth. But nothing could be made out in the stark blackness of the room. He turned on his flashlight. Lo and behold! There on an earthen bed were 14 enemy soldiers crowded together with their legs interlocked, sound asleep. Chang Lan-ting was making ready to capture one of them alive and then to clear off the rest by hand-grenades, when one soldier at the west end of the bed suddenly awoke and, seizing a carbine, was about to fire.

The moment was most critical. A single second's delay, and nobody could tell who was alive and who was dead. Chang Lan-ting's hand shot up, and "bang!" the man immediately fell flat. All the others on the bed were roused out of their sleep. If the south room were not so close by, he could have threatened these enemies into raising their hands and surrendering. There was still time enough to finish off these rascals. So long as one second was available, he would not spare their lives. Turning on the flashlight in his left hand, he raised up his Mauser in his right hand and ranging it from outside to inside, "bang, bang, bang," he called the roll of enemy soldiers one by one.

After the last one lay dead, Chang Lan-ting pushed the door open, took a long stride toward the left and slid past the doorway of the south room in a flash. He seized hold of Liu Chih-ching's arm, stealthily ran out of the gate and dashed straight forward outside the village.

The series of gun reports aroused the enemy in the whole village from their dreams. The tranquillity which had reigned a moment before was now gone. The panic-stricken enemy troops, without seeing even the shadows of the scouts, fired their guns blindly and at random.

After Chang Lan-ting reported to the head of the reconnaissance department that a British detachment was stationed at Oyaso, he was immediately given a new mission — to get hold of them as captives. He figured that as the scouts had struck into the very nest of their adversaries in the dead of night, the latter would certainly send soldiers to search and patrol at daybreak. Accordingly he decided to lay an ambush before dawn in front of their positions.

Just as day was breaking, the scouts with cotton-padded coats turned inside out lay in concealment amid scrubby trees and bushes on a hill in the west. Close by the Temple Mountain, the western hill was situated in front of the enemy positions. At its foot ran a highway where the adversaries were constantly in action.

The hill was canopied with thin mist like a veil of white gauze. From the southern hill the shadowy forms of a dozen men were moving along the highway toward the western one. In front, a group of four, and some 50 metres behind them, another group of seven or eight men —they seemed to be the enemy's reconnaissance party. As Chang Lan-ting saw them approaching step by step, he said to the 2nd Squad leader at his side, "Bring a small group and climb down the hillside and lie in wait at the bend in the highway." Then he spread out his fingers and said with a wave of his hand, "Cast out the net, and let the fishes swim in of their own accord. We must catch them alive."

"Yes, we must capture them alive," echoed the 2nd Squad leader with a nod.

"How are you going to bag your victims?"

"We shall let the first two men pass on, then fire at the other pair in the rear to strike them down, and in the confusion dash over with all our might to seize the two in front.... But it's pretty hard to deal with the bigger group of adversaries in the rear."

"You may go now! We shall manage that gang of robbers. We shall give them such a barrage of gunfire, as to leave them no time to raise their heads!" said Chang Lan-ting with an air of confidence that indicated a well-conceived plan in his mind. "Now act on this plan. Be composed, and remember not only to capture them but to seize them with such dexterity that they will not be able to fire one shot."

As the 2nd Squad leader proceeded to crawl down the hill, Chang Lan-ting enjoined him again and again, to be self-possessed and bade him listen for the machine-gun report as the signal for action.

The adversaries on the highway came closer and closer, like a school of fat fish swimming into the net. The scouts lay quietly on the ground, now chewing withered grass in the corner of their mouths, now keeping in check their well-nigh uncontrollable coughing. They all knew that at the slightest cough, not only the chance of capturing the adversaries would be lost, but they themselves would be discovered and consequently be subject to the enemy's gunfire.

Chang Lan-ting lay at the side of a light machine-gun, raising his head to fix his eyes on the enemy, while the camouflage of pine twigs on his cap swayed gently. The light machine-gunner trained the muzzle of his gun on the shadowy forms of the enemy, shifting it slightly in accordance with their movement. The forests on the mountain were enveloped in an atmosphere of tranquillity. Every scout was ready to dart forward like an arrow from a taut bow.

When the group of enemy soldiers came to a spot some 50 metres away from the western hill, they communicated with their men on the Temple Mountain and turned round to go back again.

"Damn!" Chang Lan-ting, eyes snapping, uttered a low cry in a suppressed tone in spite of himself. The fat fish on the point of swimming into the net had suddenly slipped off. Chang Lan-ting was in an unbearable state of disappointment and anxiety. However, he kept himself under control. When he again raised his head to look at the enemy soldiers, they were still in communication with those on the summit.

"If we delay firing for another moment, the enemy will be gone," said the machine-gunner in a low voice, as he touched Chang Lan-ting's arm.

"It seems they may not go away. Let's keep the net spread open and wait."

The enemy soldiers shouted vociferously toward the summit and now actually turned round to continue their march. In an instant the four in front passed our "tongue-catching" group and turned the corner to go westward. Those in the rear were slowly approaching. The scouts looked at Chang Lan-ting in great tension. All of a sudden, Chang Lan-ting waved his hand vigorously:

"Fire, give it to them hot!"

A shower of cartridges poured from the light machine-gun and knocked out the group of enemy soldiers in the rear. At the same time, the automatic rifles of the "tongue-catching" group began to crack. Sun Yu-lin, scout in the 2nd Squad, sprang to his feet and dashed over bravely toward the enemy....

On a slope covered with thick forests, the head of the reconnaissance department in the division was reading a wireless dispatch from the headquarters.

"Promptly organize your men to catch 'tongues,' find out the whereabouts of the U.S. 3rd Division and the British 29th Brigade...."

Just then, Chang Lan-ting and his group of scouts were coming up to the head of the reconnaissance department with two captives of the British 29th Brigade under safe guard.

The head of the reconnaissance department arose with alacrity; irrepressible gladness welled up from the bottom of his heart, lighting up his whole countenance.

"Well, comrades, you have come just in the nick of time!"

"Let me report. . . ."

"There is no need of reporting. I will cross-question the captives first. As for you, well, go directly to the shelter to keep yourselves warm."

The scouts could not but be pleased at seeing the happiness of their superior. Then, they suddenly began to feel the pangs of hunger.

Yonder on the summit, enemy guns were blindly shelling the slope where the scouts had lain in ambush. . . .

THE VEHEMENT ASSAULT UPON TANKS

LAO SHIH and LI WEI-SHENG

Lei Pao-shen, a native of Tawu Village in Shangtsai County, Honan Province, was born in 1924. He joined the Chinese People's Liberation Army in June 1948 and was accepted as a member of the Chinese Communist Party in December of the same year. He joined the Chinese People's Volunteers in November 1950, serving first as deputy squad leader and then squad leader. In the battle of Chilbongsan Mountain during the Fourth Campaign, the whole squad fought heroically under his leadership and destroyed 11 enemy tanks. For this exploit, the CPV Command accorded him, on January 4, 1953, a special-class merit and the title of Hero of the First Class. The Standing Committee of the Supreme People's Assembly of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea also conferred on him an Order of Honoured Fighter, First Class.

— EDITOR

Height 299 was wrapped in the murky curtain of night. The cold winds of Korea's early spring blew briskly and set the pine branches and withered grass rustling. Between two dwarfish pines, there was a half open dug-out. Enemy night bombers roared as they swept over the sky; the searchlights from the direction of Uijongbu constantly illuminated the summit. Every now and then from the low mounds on the south the enemy cannon rumbled.

Outside the shelter it was bitterly cold, yet inside it was stifling hot. The 4th Squad charged with the mission of checking the advance of enemy tanks was having a conference. Squad Leader Lei Pao-shen squatted cross-legged in their midst. He was quite a handsome youth with a pointed chin, a broad forehead, and a pair of large sparkling eyes. He asked Huang Hsin-tien, a marksman in the anti-tank rocket-launching group sent by the battalion headquarters to reinforce the squad, to explain the functions of tanks first, and then he rallied his men with a short speech:

". . . When charging us with this mission the company commander said that this time the American troops are pushing northward with tanks as their vanguard. Chilbongsan Mountain is the main dominating point that commands the path from Uijongbu to Yonchon with Height 299 as a doorway on its western side. American tanks have to traverse the highway that runs across the middle part of the mountain. Our mission is to prevent them from crossing it. . . .

"Let all of us think over the ways and means of most effectively preventing this. The political instructor has wisely remarked that the greater the number of men, the richer is their wisdom. After all two heads are better than one. Whoever has hit upon a happy idea will please. . . ."

"To my mind," said a tall soldier by the name of Yuan Teh-ho, "let nine of us each bring some anti-tank hand-grenades, and lie in wait on the highway. If the oncoming tanks are few in number, three soldiers will cope with one; if more are coming, then each soldier will be responsible for one."

"Yes, they must be destroyed."

Machine-gunner Li Yun-piao had felt ill at ease ever since the squad was assigned the mission. He thought: tanks are completely made of steel, impervious to the fire of heavy machine-guns, to say nothing of that of light weapons. He entertained the notion of handing over his machine-gun to some other soldiers and throwing in his lot with the party

engaged in assailing tanks. Now, on hearing Yuan Teh-ho's opinion, he agreed wholeheartedly.

Wang Kuo-ming, a soldier with long fighting experience behind him, now spoke in a low drawl:

"That sort of attack proposed by Yuan Teh-ho, I'm afraid . . . won't do."

"Won't do? Why? Tanks are operated by drivers. At the explosion of our anti-tank hand-grenades, the adversaries inside the tanks would be so stupefied that it's a sure thing we could capture them alive; and perhaps they would be pulverized together with their tanks!"

The underground shelter was so dark that nobody's facial expression could be observed even by his closest neighbour. But from the intonation of his words, the audience could easily form a mental picture of Yuan Teh-ho fixing his large eyes on Wang Kuo-ming. The latter, however, spoke in quite a calm voice:

"I don't mean that anti-tank hand-grenades are not to be used for the assault. But I do mean it is impossible to lie in wait on the highway where for lack of any sort of camouflage everything is so exposed that even a sprinkling of men crawling along it can be detected from afar by the enemy. . . . If that plan of attack be adopted, instead of assaulting them, we run the hazard of being assaulted."

"To think that one engaged in war should be afraid of being attacked! If we do not lay in wait for them on the highway, shall we wait on this summit? When the tanks burst through those mountain passes, how are we to overtake them? With courage, even steel armour could be reduced to ashes. With the nine of us and half a hundred anti-tank hand-grenades I don't doubt we can destroy a dozen tanks. Who is going to operate my machine-gun? I volunteer to assail the first tank!" Li Yun-piao positively insisted on the idea of lying in wait on the highway for the enemy tanks.

Lei Pao-shen understood the emotion of his men — their natural urge to strike boldly and fearlessly. When he himself

was a common soldier, he had the same feeling. In those days, he used to think the secret of a battle was simple enough: "Mow down the enemy with machine-guns and then dash forward to settle the whole business with a shower of hand-grenades." But now he had been seasoned in battles. In addition to experience, he learned from the instructions of his superiors and realized more clearly the importance of tactics in warfare. The ideas just expressed by his men had gone round and round in his mind. He thought hard: in order to destroy the tanks, he must think out a plan whereby his men could lie in concealment and sally forth in a moment. The best solution was to dig a communication trench leading to the highway. Then he began to speak:

"Your courage is commendable. But we come here to beat the enemy, and not to be beaten by them. Our company commander has enjoined us to guard against the idea of a reckless assault. We should figure out ways of attack suited to the topography of our positions." He went on to explain the problem as he saw it. Then in a rousing tone of voice he said:

"First of all, we must secrete ourselves. Not that we are afraid of their tanks, but that we want to destroy them thoroughly, completely. Effective ways are not ready-made, they have to be discovered by hard thinking."

Lei Pao-shen's words guided the thought of his comrades on to the right track. For a time perfect silence reigned inside the underground shelter.

Huang Hsin-tien, giving a slight shake to his benumbed legs, said in a bashful manner, "The method just described by our squad leader is decidedly a good one. Its only drawback lies in the long distance of 300-odd metres from the summit to the highway. There's a solitary precipice near the highway about the height of two men. It would be better to dig a crescent-shaped trench from the side of the precipice opening at each end on to the highway. When the enemy tanks approach the precipice, we can sally forth from both ends, attacking those in the front and blocking up those in the rear,

and thus take them completely by surprise.... Our company commander has aptly compared this detached precipice in Height 299 to a tiger's mouth. Now, let us make good use of this rocky 'mouth' to devour American tanks. Isn't it a good idea?"

"A happy idea!" Wang Kuo-ming quite agreed.

Others nodded their assent too and began to whisper to one another, filling the shelter with a sort of gurgling sound as if a kettle of water were boiling. Liang Hsin-fa alone sat in the farthest corner in obstinate silence. He remained speechless for a long while and then said hesitatingly:

"So, the fortifications on the summit are to be abandoned? After a whole day and a night's hard digging, they are to be soon...."

"Liang Hsin-fa, is it such a pity to abandon the fortifications when they are no longer needed?" asked Yen Yin-kuang.

Again Liang Hsin-fa spoke, "What shall we do with the fortifications up there then? Are they just to lie exposed on the summit?"

"I think," said Wang Kuo-ming, "we might convert them into a sort of sham fortifications."

Yuan Teh-ho began to laugh merrily:

"Ha, ha . . . let the enemy bombard them blindly!"

The words of his comrades gave Lei Pao-shen great inspiration, solving as they did the unsettled problems in his mind and supplying him with ideas which had never occurred to him. To convert the fortifications on the summit into sham ones seemed to him a capital idea. Sure enough, didn't we once lead the enemy troops northward by the nose from the southern bank of the Han-gang River just by leaving a sprinkling of good-for-nothing fortifications along the roads and thus creating in their minds all sorts of illusions? Sham fortifications, that is wonderful! If the enemy take them for the targets of their bombardment, our real fortifications will be left unimpaired. If the enemy discover them to be sham

fortifications... perhaps in all rashness they will rush precisely into the place where our ambush lies in wait....

Lei Pao-shen was gratified in the extreme when he thought of this happy conclusion.

"All of you have very clever ideas! Think a little more now. Are there any other problems?"

Yen Yin-kuang raised a new one:

"If only a few tanks draw near, we can intercept them at both ends, some launching attacks in the front others striking from the rear. But, how are we going to handle it if the tanks should come up in pretty good number, forming a long line by themselves?"

"How? Attack and block up as many as possible! After these are put out of action, those in the rear stand no chance of escape and can be destroyed in turn." Li Yun-piao spoke out his mind as if he were firing his machine-gun.

Yen Yin-kuang blinked and asked again, "Are we then going to attack the tanks when they come to a stop or rather when they are still running? How are we going to manage it if they don't stop?"

Lei Pao-shen was absorbed in figuring out ways of launching the action, giving signals and guarding against the onrush of the enemy's infantry. This train of thought was sidetracked by Yen Yin-kuang's questions which he felt were worth solving. Yes, he thought, at the precipice there is an S-shaped curve. Including the turns, its whole length hardly exceeds 200 metres; if the bends are not included in the calculation, it is only about 100 metres long. Should just a few American tanks come along, they can be destroyed by blocking up both ends; if ten or more come rumbling at a good pace stretched out along a length of, say, 200-odd metres, how can they be intercepted effectively?

A crescent moon rose from the east, shedding a stream of pale light into the shelter.

All of a sudden, Li Yun-piao shouted aloud, "Squad Leader, there is a way to it. Let us, the machine-gun group, lie in

wait by the highway. When the enemy tanks approach the precipice, they will be compelled to stop by our machine-gun fire — of which they are most afraid."

"That should be our mission, the task of the rocket-launching group. It won't do for the machine-gun group to take our place." Chen Yung-hua, a soldier in the anti-tank rocket-launching group, who had so far kept absolute silence, now grew anxious as he saw that the mission of his group was about to be taken off their hands.

"Why so? You may rest assured that our machine-gun fire can bring the American tanks to a standstill." Li Yun-piao evidently was a bit impatient.

Chen Yung-hua said by way of explanation, "The mission of you machine-gunners is to fire at the infantry coming after the tanks! Moreover, owing to the deafening roar of the tanks, their drivers can hardly catch the reports of your machine-guns."

"Yes, Comrade Li! The anti-tank rocket-launcher is an effective weapon for assailing tanks. If they continue to run on, our shells can bring them to a halt," said Huang Hsin-tien.

Seeing they were vying with each other for the mission, Lei Pao-shen hastened to observe:

"All right, this mission is to be taken up by the rocket-launching group!... Li Yun-piao, your duty of wiping out the infantry is quite an arduous one; for there are always foot soldiers in the wake of the tanks. Just think how good it is to hold back the infantry so as to cover those who are launching onsets on the tanks, and to wipe out as many enemy soldiers as possible. If the whole squad shows excellent teamwork this time, you are sure to have a fair share in the credit."

Satisfied with the squad leader's statement, Li Yun-piao said no more, both hands kept on fondling his beloved machine-gun. He was the best machine-gunner in his former Liberation Army regiment. Once in shooting on water where the target and its prop were constantly swaying, he registered 21

points with three shots; and while shooting on land he scored 27 points with the same number of shots.

The conference was now drawing to a close. Finally, Lei Pao-shen, wishing to be sure of the squad's support, said:

"Suppose we dig the 'crescent' trench right now!"

"Yes, right now!" shouted the whole squad in one breath.

* * *

On March 27, 1951, Chilbongsan Mountain presented a clear-cut silhouette at dawn. Its seven peaks, like the overlapping petals of a lotus blossom, were rivalling each other in height. Slopes, hillsides and gorges were clothed with countless Korean pines and shaggy evergreens. Monstrous rocks stood perpendicular against the sky. That narrow strip of tableland at the tip of the southwestern angle is Height 299 itself. On its west flows the 100-metre-wide Sinchon River. The railroad and highway from Uijongbu northward to Yonchon running hard by the river-bed and the mountain traverse a series of terraces on its western slope. In laying the foundation of the highway the workers had cut the slope so as to form a detached bluff about double the stature of an ordinary man. At present, on that precipice there appeared a newly-dug crescent-shaped trench.

Several enemy planes flew round and round over Chilbongsan Mountain, occasionally swooping down to fire machine-guns and drop bombs, evidently as the prelude to a violent assault.

Inside the trench Lei Pao-shen kept a close watch on the front. He had not got a wink of sleep for three days and nights, his eye-balls were bloodshot. The scenes of their recent conference kept flashing through his mind one after the other; the company commander's words charging him with the mission were ringing in his ears. An unconscious feeling of responsibility weighed heavy on his shoulders.

According to the calculation of the regimental headquarters, the American troops advancing northward were to launch des-

perate onslaughts upon Chilbongsan Mountain. It was now broad daylight. A sharp volley of gunfire rose in the east, but before Height 299 no traces of American soldiers could be discerned. Lei Pao-shen was plunged into a state of perplexity and tension. He himself could not describe what his feelings were like at that moment.

Suddenly, the roaring of cannon and the crackling of rifles were wafted over from the west. The U.S. 3rd Division had now launched an attack upon our brother troops, in their attempt to flank the left side of Chilbongsan Mountain from the west bank of the Sinchon River.

Yen Yin-kuang and Liang Hsin-fa were discussing something in a low whisper. Yuan Teh-ho took out an anti-tank hand-grenade from his belt leaning in tense silence against an earthen wall, his eyes fixed upon the sky. Lei Pao-shen, screening himself behind a clump of withered grass, was observing with all the keenness of his faculties the gullies, hamlets and forests in front, especially the southern terminus of the highway — the direction of Uijongbu.

At two o'clock in the afternoon ponderous thuds of motors came unexpectedly from the southwest. These sounds seemed to electrify the soldiers who like untried swallow fledglings popped their heads out from the trench.

To the north of Songori Village appeared a group of pitch-black tanks. The soldiers began to chatter animatedly:

"One, two, the tanks are coming now!"

"Ten, twelve."

"There's a jeep among them. Maybe some high officers."

"Go into hiding; go into hiding!" Lei Pao-shen's face became very stern. "Wang Kuo-ming is responsible for observation. All of you conceal yourselves, and get everything ready!"

Immediately the trench was filled with an atmosphere of hurried excitement and tension. The men forgot completely the fatigue caused by long marches from morning to night and the hasty building of fortifications. Yuan Teh-ho took off his

cotton-padded coat and rolled up his shirt sleeves in order to fight with greater ease and nimbleness. Yen Yin-kuang threw away his cotton-padded shoes to walk in his stockinged feet lest he might not run swiftly enough to have a hand in battling with the enemy tanks.

"Come, you bastards. You shall have no retreat from your onward march!" Lei Pao-shen's eyes were fixed rigidly on the line of tanks rolling up towards them. After cursing the tanks in a sort of soliloquy, he promptly cast aside his cotton-padded coat.

When the tanks crawled up to the cement bridge about 500-odd metres in front of our position, they stopped abruptly. From the turret of the first tank popped out the head of an enemy soldier who surveyed Height 299 with a field glass. Lei Pao-shen hastily shrank back and said to himself in alarm, "We are in danger of being discovered." Then the enemy tanks began moving again greatly to Lei Pao-shen's relief. He charged Li Yun-piao in a low but hurried tone:

"More than a hundred enemy soldiers are following the tanks. At the first blast from the rocket-launcher, you aim a vigorous attack so as to prevent them from dashing over the cement bridge. Have you got my words? Be sure to use every ounce of your energy."

... The first two tanks crawled up under the precipice. Several enemy soldiers thrust out their heads through the turret hatches to look round.

The tanks continued to crawl forward. The first ones had just turned the S-shaped curve and were about to reach the north end of the precipice, closely followed by the rest. Only the last tank — the twelfth one was left far behind.

At this very moment, "Thud!" a rocket bomb struck the enemy's first tank on its tail.

It stopped short, then the second jammed against its rear only to block the next one. Thus, a series of tanks were wedged under the precipice on a strip of land not longer than 200 metres. The enemy commanding officer, looking at the

spots where the shells landed, howled and shrieked as if he had a mind to clear off hastily from this dangerous zone. But it was already too late for those robbers to make their escape. The 4th Squad like a pair of huge pincers held them in a firm grip under the precipice.

Having given the signal to charge Lei Pao-shen took up his anti-tank hand-grenades and ran down the precipice. How he got down the steep descent he failed to recall now; he could only remember his hurried plunge on to the highway in vigorous strides. He had no time for careful consideration, but instantly threw an anti-tank hand-grenade on to the caterpillar-belt of the eleventh tank, which fell rattling to the ground at the flash of the explosion.

He rapidly transferred another hand-grenade from his left hand to the right and, with a quick turn of his body and raising his hand, he hurled the grenade which burst with a terrific explosion on the steel plate of the tenth tank. Lei Pao-shen felt only the tremendous vibrations of the earth and the swaying of his own body. He composed himself. A glare of fire flashed before his eyes and he saw indistinctly that the roof of the tank was torn open. Instinctively he took a grenade from his pocket and tossed it over. Without waiting for the explosion, he strode past the ninth tank already blown up by Yuan Teh-ho, and made a dash towards the eighth one.

The protruding angle jutting out in the rear of this tank had already been hit by Yuan Teh-ho's hand-grenade, but its interior was not damaged. Now, the tank made a violent forward lurch. Clang! It collided with the seventh tank. Then it backed up rapidly and rushed directly towards Lei Pao-shen. Lei, drawing another hand-grenade out of his belt, was about to attack when the tank closed in upon him. Seeing no way to dodge out of sight, he twisted round and threw himself down by the roadside. The tank scraped his side as it passed. Lei Pao-shen got up instantly, muttering to himself: "You have failed to knock me down, it is I who will

give you the death blow!" With lightning speed he threw his grenade.

Not having got his hand-grenade ready for use, Yuan Teh-ho was now biting the plug with his teeth. He did not see that on the jeep which was jammed in the line of tanks, three American soldiers were aiming at him with revolvers. Lei Pao-shen, who came up in the rear, sensed the danger and with an anxious cry "Lie down," leaned himself against that immovable tank beside him. Whack! He hurled a grenade. Almost simultaneously two others were dropped from the precipice above. Amid terrific explosions the enemy soldiers on the jeep dispersed like scarecrows in a hurricane.

It was Huang Hsin-tien and Chen Yung-hua who had flung these two hand-grenades. After fulfilling their mission of stopping the tanks with their rocket bombs, lest they should hurt their own comrades by firing from the precipice, they leaped down to take part in assaulting the tanks.

Wang Kuo-ming led Yen Yin-kuang and Liang Hsin-fa from the north of the precipice on to the highway. One after the other they assailed the tanks from the first to the sixth and then were brought face to face with Lei Pao-shen.

"Have you destroyed all of them, Wang Kuo-ming?" Lei Pao-shen shouted in a loud voice. As his own ears were ringing with the percussion of the explosions he was afraid that the others would not catch his question.

"All finished! Just look, how high the tongues of flame are leaping up!"

"Good, go back to your positions," Lei Pao-shen waved a white towel over his head.

Dense volumes of smoke and flame rose in mid-air over the highway, while the shells inside the tanks caught fire and exploded with the roll of thunder.

Li Yun-piao's machine-gun was rattling away. The hundred or more American soldiers on the south of the cement bridge merely shrieked with terror but dared not dash over the bridge. They gazed helplessly at the burning tanks.

On his return to the trench, Lei Pao-shen's mental tension had not slackened. Alertly he fixed his eyes on the tanks. Suddenly the thought of his own negligence flashed across his mind! "Hell! I forgot to make a check! If some tanks are still undamaged and make a dash ahead, then everything will be lost!..."

As Lei Pao-shen was about to jump out of the trench to examine the situation, the motor of the second tank started up. Closely in its wake followed the fifth, the seventh and the lagging twelfth whose guns were all roaring in the direction of Height 299.

Presently five enemy planes flew over at a low altitude, dropping napalm bombs on the high slopes.

Lei Pao-shen turned round to look at the summit of Height 299, and found it blasted almost beyond recognition, while not a single shell had fallen on their newly-dug crescent-shaped trench. He thought appreciatively of Huang Hsin-tien, for it was that young man who had suggested this very good idea.

The three American tanks coming to life again plunged Lei Pao-shen into a state of anxiety and regret — anxiety about the tanks breaking through the line, regret at his own failure to have destroyed them completely. He put two hand-grenades into his belt and stood up, ready to make another assault. Plump! A man fell heavily on his back.

"Who are you?"

"Me...." Chou Shih-wu, the ammunition-man, was in such a great flurry that he simply could not utter a proper sentence: "Squad Leader.... Tanks ... tanks alive; order me ...me to strike this time!"

"Quick, go back to your machine-gun."

"Squad Leader...." Chou stretched out his five fingers: "All the cartridge belts... all of them have been filled."

Chou looked much younger for a moment. His wrinkled face was lighted up with a wondrous glow. Lei Pao-shen had a liking for such high-spirited men, and admiration for such

loyal enthusiasm. Now he has filled all five cartridge belts, why not let him go?

"First go and tell Wang Kuo-ming and the other comrades that just as wolves must be beaten to death, so tanks must be pulverized. Tell them to launch a second attack at once!"

In one quick jump Lei Pao-shen leaped out of the trench, running and shouting at the same time:

"Comrades, strike! Blow them up!"

Simultaneously a tremendous shout rose high up on the slope:

"Attack them! Let not one escape."

The American soldiers inside the seventh tank instantaneously stopped firing. Several of them got out from the driver's window and the turret hatch, and ran towards the river bank. Lei Pao-shen could not lay hold of the runners, for he was a dozen steps away from them. However, he jumped lightly on to the tank and threw a hand-grenade into its interior. Unexpectedly the shock of the explosion flung him down from the tank with terrific force. He was so stunned that he could hardly breathe. . . .

When Wang Kuo-ming dashed to the highway the American soldiers on the second tank were still firing right and left. He stood beside the third tank, shouting, "Let me see you fire again." A hand-grenade burst on the turret of the second tank. . . .

The enemy soldiers on the fifth tank seeing that all was lost were trying to escape through the hatch. Yuan Teh-ho rushed towards them with his arms outstretched, intent on catching them alive. But the cowards drew back at his approach. He climbed up on the tank to force off the turret lid, which however would not yield to his efforts, when Chou Shih-wu came up and shouted:

"Yuan Teh-ho, you can't wrench it off. Let them be buried with the tank!"

They both hurled their hand-grenades into the tank through a small opening.

The highway was enveloped in ever thickening volumes of smoke and flame!

Two machine-guns on the twelfth tank were strafing the highway. With their bullets rattling against the damaged tanks, "dead tortoises" as our soldiers called them, Lei Pao-shen, who had just come to himself, took in the critical situation at a glance. Fearing that some casualty might befall his men, he at once shouted, "Wang Kuo-ming, bring your comrades back to the trench." Then he crawled on all fours along the gully between the highway and the railroad towards the twelfth tank.

He made several attempts to leap up and dash forward. But now he was the target of enemy machine-gun fire. Where the bullets fell he did not know, but he was quite clear that these two machine-guns took a very low aim. Therefore he exerted the utmost effort as he crawled forward on all fours. He seemed to hear shouting: "Quick, quick, blow it up, capture it!" He forgot everything, his eyes fixed on that American tank. Though his arms and knees were bleeding from the sharp stones, he felt no pain at all; he was only conscious of the slowness of his own crawling. "Faster, faster!" he urged himself.

The nearer Lei Pao-shen approached the tank, the denser was its machine-gun fire as it swept over his head like violent gusts of wind. He was enveloped in the dust and smoke raised by the bullets. The back of one of his hands was wounded, but he did not care and still crawled forward resolutely and steadily! When he was only some 20 metres from the tank, its motor emitted several loud rumbles and its wheels clanked noisily. He was dumbfounded. Staring and watching closely, he saw that ponderous American tank falling back and vibrating all over — withdrawing about 30-odd metres. Lei Pao-shen instantly comprehended that the nearer he got to the tank, the greater was the dead angle of its machine-gun fire. Thus, he was inspired with new courage and crawled forward with redoubled rapidity. The ground he left behind was full

of tiny holes pierced by machine-gun bullets and long furrow-like strips of fresh earth ploughed up as he wormed his way forward.

He was now quite near the tank. He got up on his knees and was about to throw his hand-grenade when that "steel tortoise" again fell back with noisy clatter.

A small mound lay between Lei Pao-shen and the tank. The machine-gun fire from the tank completely blocked this mound. He made several vain attempts to climb it, but bullets flew over whenever he stuck out his head; they fell right and left about him as he twisted his body round. Lei Pao-shen had a strong urge to jump out with a sudden spring, feeling as if he were confined in a stewing pan. Of course he could not and did not act so recklessly. He swiftly transferred the grenade from his left hand to the right and hurled it forth with great vigour; immediately he rose to his feet, ready to rush forward under cover of the smoke. But at the explosion, the "steel tortoise" unexpectedly drew back to a greater distance with double quick speed and precipitate haste till it reached the other side of the cement bridge and made its escape.

Lei Pao-shen and his 4th Squad had destroyed 11 enemy tanks without a single casualty to the squad itself.

TAKING CAPTIVES ALIVE

WANG MIN

Liu Kuang-tse, a native of the Kangchinhou Banner in the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region, was born in 1921. He joined the Chinese People's Liberation Army in November 1948 and the Chinese People's Volunteers in February 1951, serving at different times as deputy squad leader and squad leader. In June 1952, he was given a first-class merit and the title of Hero of the Second Class by the CPV Command for having captured 63 enemy soldiers at one fell swoop during the Fifth Campaign near Kyongpangdong North Mountain, southwest of Yonchon. On June 25 of the same year, he was awarded an Order of Honoured Fighter, First Class, by the Standing Committee of the Supreme People's Assembly of the Korean Democratic People's Republic. He became a member of the Chinese Communist Party on July 1, 1952.

— EDITOR

It was evening, on the day following our break-through of the enemy's defence line along the Imjin River. Liu Kuang-tse was on sentry duty at Kamyosan Mountain on the south bank of the river, standing beneath an old pine tree one side of which was blown off by a bomb. It was April, but the weather was still cold in North Korea; the sunless ravines were covered with glassy, slippery snow which was as hard as nails. Liu was still wearing cotton-padded clothes, spattered

all over with yellow mud. He was not tall, but his broad shoulders and thick chest testified to his robust health. In his ruddy, weather-beaten face sparkled a pair of eyes which narrowed into slits whenever he smiled. Now with both hands holding the tommy gun slung across his chest, he kept a vigilant watch on the area around him.

Clouds of smoke drifted from burnt trees all over the mountain. In the distance sounded the roaring of guns and the explosions of hand-grenades, now in quick succession and now at longer intervals. Liu pressed down the barrel of his gun, turned round and kept his eyes on the foggy Imjin River, once boasted of by the enemy as a "natural barrier." Enemy long-range guns, firing sometimes briskly, sometimes indifferently, as if attacked by malaria, were blocking the ferry. Enemy planes dropped countless flares all along the river, and wantonly dumped tons of bombs. By the light of the flares and the exploding shells, one could see the winding torrent of the river, sending up now and then huge columns of whitish foam. On the south bank all the hill-tops, villages, and forests had been hit by enemy napalm bombs. Everywhere was dense smoke and furious fire.

"Don't know how many more of the Korean villagers have been killed!" Liu Kuang-tse could not help thinking of the night when he first crossed the Yalu River.

All the villages this side of the river had been reduced to ashes, all the roads dotted with bomb craters. From the big frozen underground caverns emerged old women and children, dressed in white clothes without lining. They came out, eyes filled with grateful tears, to welcome their own dearly beloved ones — the Chinese People's Volunteers. Here was Korea! What misery had the American robbers inflicted upon the country and the people! No wonder people used to say that China and Korea are just like lips and teeth, separated only by this river! If the enemy had taken a few more steps forward, crossing this very river, the same fate would have befallen our motherland. Indeed, wouldn't our new factories

have also been reduced to ashes? Would it do if these mad dogs were not annihilated? This was the first of the resolutions kindled in Liu Kuang-tse's heart after he entered Korea.

The farther south he went, the greater the calamity of the Koreans, the greater the enmity in Liu's heart, and the more anxious he grew to have an engagement with the enemy. On the very evening when they broke through the enemy's line along the Imjin River, Liu and others in his company gathered on the top of a hill. Their kitchen was located in an old Korean woman's home at the foot of the hill. This woman, with thin, white hair and wrinkled face, and her children were helping the cooks in their work. They were going to set the tables, when the enemy's artillery fired at their hut and reduced it, along with the food, to smoke and flames. The old woman's home was completely destroyed. The platoon leader and his deputy were wounded. So Liu Kuang-tse and all the comrades alike joined in the battle with great indignation and hatred.

Between breaking through the enemy's line along the Imjin River and the arrival at Kamyosan Mountain, only one battle was fought — against the enemy's counter-attack. The battle was so easily won that they felt no relief to their anger. This depressed and annoyed Liu so much that he knit his brows tightly. He was gazing steadily at the foot of the mountain. On both sides of the road and in the ditches nearby were the ruined enemy tanks and motors damaged by the shells of our artillery units or the anti-tank hand-grenades of our infantry. Tongues of flame spread southward with the wind; the rattling of rifles, the roar of guns and the explosions of anti-tank hand-grenades, sometimes brisk and sometimes intermittent, were also heard more and more to the south.

"After having fought for 24 hours, we have not yet seen what living enemy soldiers look like! If things should go on like this, wouldn't my resolution. . . ." He felt as if something were slipping away from him and he must snatch at it quickly. His mind was in great confusion; he pushed back his cotton-padded cap so as to let the cold air refresh him. Suddenly a

sound came from the bush behind. He quickly extended his tommy gun and lowered his voice: "Who is it?"

"Me."

"Oh, Squad Leader." Liu withdrew his gun and advanced two steps. The squad leader's face was smeared with sweat and mud. He was called Liu Chung. As both the leader of the 2nd Platoon and his deputy were wounded, he was acting as leader of that platoon. But since he was still leader of the 6th Squad, Liu Kuang-tse and other comrades of the squad still called him squad leader. Liu Chung squatted on a stone at Liu Kuang-tse's right and then, wiping off the sweat under his cap, said, "Liu Kuang-tse, have you noticed? All the noise is moving steadily southward. Our brother units have all made their thrust right among the enemy. According to the company commander, our superiors have ordered our company to thrust forward right away." So saying, he jumped down from the stone and pointed to the southwest.

Liu Kuang-tse looked towards the small dim peak in the distance, as indicated by the squad leader. Some sparks of fire could be faintly seen. Nothing else was visible.

"Our task is. . ." added the squad leader, "to penetrate into Sagimak, break through the defence line of the British 29th Brigade and occupy Kyongpangdong North Mountain so as to cut off their way of escape. Liu Kuang-tse, the task is rather arduous. Whether we can accomplish it depends solely on our determination!" So saying, the squad leader looked at him with searching eyes.

Liu Kuang-tse kept gazing at the indistinct peaks in the direction of Sagimak. He was only sorry that he could not fly there in one swoop and have a good fight to his heart's content. He hastily asked the squad leader, "When shall we attack?"

"We must hold a meeting of the squad right away to discuss the instructions of our superiors before we set out." Then the squad leader left.

The meeting was held on a hillside. Having sat down on the ground Liu Chung, the acting platoon leader, told his men to sit around him. They had been fighting and marching for a whole day and a night, without having had any food or sleep. They were practically worn out with fatigue. Now as they heard they were going to be given a new task, strength came back to them as if they had been injected with a stimulant.

"Comrades," Liu Chung began, "our company is to make a thrust right into the enemy's positions. So far our headquarters has not been able to designate which of the enemy troops we are going to encounter. As we fight our way forward, we are expected to capture some enemy soldiers who may give us the information. Comrades, are you sure you can fulfil. . . ?"

Liu Chung had hardly finished speaking when the men shouted almost simultaneously:

"Sure, Squad Leader!"

"Rest assured, Squad Leader, we can certainly fulfil the mission!"

Liu Kuang-tse did not say a word at the meeting. As all his comrades-in-arms knew, Liu was a man of few words. He never chatted loud, but once he began to talk, the sincerity of his tone was enough to make people realize his earnestness and firmness. His mother died when he was only seven years old. He and his two brothers fled with their father to the desolate prairies of Inner Mongolia. They managed to keep alive by begging, living on coarse grain husks and tree leaves, until he grew to be 16 years old, when he returned for the first time to their old home at Shanhsien County. They rented a few *mou*[1] of land from a landlord. Suffering from rain, snow, wind and frost year in and year out, the three brothers shared one worn-out sheepskin coat. The landlord demand-

[1]One *mou* is equal to about 1/6 acre.

ed rent and the Kuomintang exacted taxes; these two were like chains round their necks. Once when they could not pay the rent and taxes, Liu Kuang-tse was bound hand and foot and dragged to the county government's office where he was flogged by way of extorting grain from him. Young as he was, he knew what best to do. He would either gnash his teeth without uttering a word, or flatly answer, "No." But in those days, however unyielding he could not get away from the devils' claws. It was not long before he was kidnapped to serve as a soldier, and endured unspeakable suffering for more than ten years in the Kuomintang army. In those long, long years, when darkness reigned over all, in return for his honesty and industry Liu earned only a life of bitterness. He had no happiness, no joy, but only silent resistance. In 1948, he was freed by the Chinese People's Liberation Army and joined the revolutionary army. He was still reluctant to talk much. Other people often chatted and made merry, but he always worked and reflected in silence. Now while everybody was voicing his decision to capture enemy soldiers, he kept thinking to himself, "Don't our higher officers want live enemy soldiers to get some information on the situation? Then of course I must capture them alive!" At last when the squad leader called him by name and asked if he had anything to say, he just said point-blank: "Determination! Wait and see at the battle." The squad leader knew his character too well to go on asking. He stood up and led his men to the place where the company was to gather.

* * *

In the evening the 2nd Company marched along two routes —the company commander taking the 1st and 3rd Platoons by the first route from the southwest ridge of Kamyosan Mountain to force their way directly towards the west, and the acting platoon leader Liu Chung leading the 2nd Platoon by the second route from the east side of the mountain ridge

to make a search towards the southwest. Liu Kuang-tse led his fighting group[1] at the head of the whole platoon.

Night was a good time to attack the enemy. In the southwest, heavy and light guns of different calibres roared together like thunder shaking the whole valley. Our siege round Sulmasan Mountain was then at its hottest.

Liu Kuang-tse, Chang Hung-chun and Hsu Li-tang were advancing some 20 metres ahead of their platoon. They went forward searching along the base of the west slope of the mountain ridge. But stumbling along the pathless rugged mountain, with shell-torn branches of trees and uprooted stones here and there in their way, they found it extremely hard to make progress. Liu Kuang-tse minded his own steps carefully and called his comrades' attention to the pitfalls underfoot, at the same time keeping an alert watch on the surrounding situation.

There were no stars. Darkness reigned all round. From afar came the indistinct rattling of machine-guns and the intermittent explosions of hand-grenades.

"Most likely our brother troops are marching ahead again." As soon as Liu thought of this, he turned his head and asked the others to hurry up. He led Chang Hung-chun and Hsu Li-tang and together they quickened their steps, dashing across the slope in front in the direction of another slope.

In his haste, Liu Kuang-tse tripped over something, lurched forward and fell into a shell crater, causing the pebbles around the crater to come rolling down. Just then a volley of gunfire was heard east of the mountain ridges. There was something queer about this; the bullets seemed to be flying just overhead. "There're enemy troops." His heart thumping, Liu hastily told Chang Hung-chun and Hsu Li-tang to lie down, and he himself crouched at the side of the crater, sticking out his tommy gun.

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[1]To achieve mobility in action, a squad sometimes may be divided into several fighting groups, each of which consists of three soldiers or so.

Accompanying the intense firing he could hear the shouts of the soldiers of the 1st Platoon:

"Take them alive!"

"Hurry up and take them alive!"

"Group Leader," Chang Hung-chun said to Liu Kuang-tse at his side, "the 1st Platoon has started fighting." Chang Hung-chun was a youngster only half Liu's age. As a rule, he wanted to be ahead of others, no matter what he did. Now that he heard the shouts about capturing enemy soldiers, he grew impatient. But Liu Kuang-tse had already figured out something. He thought, "Since the 1st Platoon is supposed to make a drive from the left and now the shouting and the firing come exactly from that dim forest on the left, ten to one it is the 1st Platoon that has opened fire." Accordingly, Liu made up his mind as to what action his group should take — to dash over the mountain ridge, go round the enemy's rear and co-operate with the 1st Platoon in completely annihilating the enemy.

As he was about to get up, someone behind him shouted, "Liu Kuang-tse!" From the familiar voice he knew that the squad leader had also rushed up. Liu at once reported on the present situation and his consequent decision. The squad leader agreed.

Together they climbed up towards the place where the gunfire came from, trying their best to climb faster.

To their surprise, when they got half-way up the mountain, they heard no more gun reports; once at the top, they could not even see any men.

"Can it be that we have gone in the wrong direction?" Liu Kuang-tse was thus wondering, when he heard a soldier shout in a Northeast China accent: "Group Leader, here they are, dead enemy soldiers, two dead!" By the voice Liu Kuang-tse knew it was Chang Hung-chun, and he went over with Hsu Li-tang. They looked closely and sure enough there was one enemy soldier sprawling beside a stone. Another was lying farther out face-down, presumably shot while he was running

away. "Judging from their shout 'take them alive' they must have captured some enemy soldiers," Liu mused in silence.

"How smartly they go about it," said Hsu Li-tang grumbling as if he meant to be heard by Liu Kuang-tse. "How about us? We don't so much as touch a hair."

"I believe as long as we follow you, Group Leader, our plan to perform meritorious services will not come to naught, but when shall we take some prisoners?"

The alert and dexterous fighting of the 1st Platoon and the apt remark of the soldier reminded Liu Kuang-tse of many things. Before he set out, his superiors had told him time and again that in making a drive forward this time he must try to take some prisoners. Moreover his own plan to perform meritorious services had also been based on this mission, and he had never expected that he should draw a blank in the first engagement. He was provoked, became gloomy and still felt as if something was slipping away from him and he must snatch it at once. After a long interval he blurted out agitatedly: "Go ahead! If the 1st Platoon can take some prisoners, why not we? Where there is a will, there is a way!"

Neither Chang Hung-chun nor Hsu Li-tang said anything, they just tore after Liu Kuang-tse down the mountain.

* * *

It was already dawn, when they rushed to reach Kyongpangdong North Mountain. According to the battalion commander's instructions, Liu Kuang-tse's group was to go to the mountain-top in the extreme east of Kyongpangdong North Mountain. Their task was to command the highway below, and not let the enemy from Sulmasan Mountain make their escape from here.

They were already in the enemy's rear. Standing on this mountain-top and looking northwest one could see the main peak of Sulmasan Mountain, where the fighting was raging. Eight F-84 fighters were whirling wildly round, diving con-

tinually on the north side of the mountain. The explosions of shells from Sulmasan Mountain indicated some confusion. The marauders were evidently in great turmoil.

On the mountain peak below, there were many trees and wild grasses, and the configuration was extremely complicated. On the sunny slope the invaders had dug oblong coffin-shaped pits to pitch their tents in, and everywhere empty tins, cigarette packages and scraps of paper were lying about in great disorder. All gave evidence that enemy troops had been stationed here not long before.

Enemy troops were not around. The battlefield was rather quiet. Unable to restrain himself, Chang Hung-chun asked Liu Kuang-tse, "Do you think, Group Leader, we can see some of the devils today?" Since he had missed the engagement the previous night, Liu Kuang-tse was in no humour for talking. He answered indifferently, "Not only see them, but also take them alive!" He had scarcely finished when Liu Chung arrived hurriedly with the main force of his platoon. Gasping, wiping off his perspiration and not yet coming to a stop, he said excitedly, "The 1st Platoon took six captives last night. Just imagine six captives! No easy job, to be sure." The squad leader said this offhand, but Liu Kuang-tse was seized with complex emotions. He felt envious, ashamed and impatient. His face flushed. He was challenging the 1st Platoon rather than expressing his own resolution when he said to the squad leader: "Be assured, Squad Leader. If the enemy from Sulmasan Mountain should turn this way we guarantee we won't let a single one slip away." The squad leader did not quite understand Liu's feelings; after telling him about the situation and leaving some instructions with him, he led his men to the mountain ridge behind.

No sooner had the squad leader left than was heard indistinctly on the highway the noise of tanks and motors which gradually grew louder and louder and more and more confused, while a cloud of dust rising on the road could clearly be seen. Chang Hung-chun pulled at Liu Kuang-tse's

shirt, and lowered his voice saying, "Group Leader, the enemy have come at last!" While speaking he released the safety-catch of his rifle at one stroke. Liu hastily held back the barrel of his gun: "Don't shoot. Wait till they come closer."

When Liu Kuang-tse pulled apart the camouflage of pine tree branches to peep out, he saw on the right below him eight or nine men climbing up. They all hung their heads, with guns and bulging yellow cloth bags on their backs.

"Group Leader, shall we shoot or take them alive?" Chang Hung-chun asked.

Liu Kuang-tse made a gesture to him, fixing both eyes on the enemy soldiers in front. All of a sudden they all ducked into the bushes and disappeared.

"Where have these rascals come from? And what do they intend to do?" Liu kept racking his brains. Observing closely, he noticed some movement among the bushes, but he did not see anyone. "They may have escaped here or been sent out on sentry duty;" he concluded. "But judging from their complete lack of precaution they certainly have not discovered that we have already occupied this mountain-top." He quietly said to both Chang and Hsu, "Watch them closely, while I'll report to the squad leader about taking these alive." So saying he stooped over and flew up towards the mountain ridge at the back.

As soon as he got the squad leader's consent, he ran back with a radiant face and the nimblest of steps.

After he told Chang Hung-chun and Hsu Li-tang what the squad leader had said, both of them immediately insisted on going with him. At first Liu thought of letting them have a try, but then he felt that if more people went, it would rather spoil matters. So he said, "This is not a pursuing attack. If more of us go, we would risk exposing ourselves, and then we'll not succeed in capturing them. Fortunately these adversaries are few in number and they are so much off their guard that I can take them by surprise. You may back me up from the mountain-top, and if there are more, we may

go together." Once again he gave them concrete instructions and then hurried down the mountain carrying hand-grenades.

He went alertly through the woods till he came quite close to eight enemy soldiers cowering together in a huddle. With his gun and his eyes fixed on them, Liu kept approaching. Unexpectedly he slipped and stumbled over a shrub lying on the ground. The noise startled the enemy. "Bang, bang!" they fired, and Liu fell.

Seeing the group leader fall, Chang Hung-chun felt a droning in his ears and was upset. "Oh, killed!" He did not quite believe that Liu was dead, but the evidence was clear — he did not get up. Chang felt very uneasy.

In fact Liu Kuang-tse, as soon as he heard the shot, had rolled down and hidden himself in the bushes near by. He felt his own body and found no wounds — only one leg of his cotton-padded trousers had a hole. He thought that since the enemy had discovered him, it would cost him dear to crouch there alone. But he could not decide how to deal with the situation. So making use of the cover of wild grasses, he climbed towards Liu Chung's position, intending to consult the squad leader before he did anything. When he neared the mountain ridge, he met Kuo Chuan-hsi, the leader of the 4th Machine-gun Squad, together with another soldier. They had been sent by Liu Chung to reinforce Liu Kuang-tse's group as soon as he heard the gunfire. After Kuo Chuan-hsi had told him why they came, Liu thought that as the squad leader had sent them round he must first of all take them back. So the three of them returned through a small copse of pine trees.

When they reached the top Chang Hung-chun kept complaining that his leader should not have run the risk all by himself. Liu Kuang-tse wiped the sweat from his forehead and looked towards the place where the enemy soldiers had gone in hiding. They were still there, sticking out their heads to look round in great alarm. He supposed that they had fired as they did out of sheer fright and that actually they

had not discovered him. He regretted for having come so near his victims and then got caught in those branches so recklessly. It was a tactical mistake to have belittled his adversary thus. Kuo Chuan-hsi, impetuous as ever, clamoured to fire his machine-gun as soon as he found enemy soldiers. Liu Kuang-tse thought that these devils had cold feet and would surely run away the minute they were fired at. Moreover, the terrain was complicated; it would be difficult to wipe them out. Above all, his superiors wanted captives. So he hastily caught Kuo's hand and said, "Don't fire. Let me capture them!"

"How are you going to make a haul?" asked Kuo.

"Look at that rock!" said Liu Kuang-tse, pointing to a black rock resembling the shape of a big ox lying in the grass, by way of explaining his plan. "These robbers have always been afraid of being surrounded, haven't they? Let us go round to the back of the rock and shoot down a few. It would be easy then to capture some of them alive. What do you think?"

"Fine! Let me cover you," said Kuo in approval after making an observation.

With the experience he had just had and the support of his comrades-in-arms, Liu Kuang-tse had more confidence than before. He asked Hsu Li-tang for an anti-tank hand-grenade and Chang Hung-chun for two full clips of cartridges for his tommy gun, and started out towards the big rock.

He ran half stooping for a while and then began to crawl forward. He crawled and crawled until he reached the back of the rock overgrown with fuzzy, green grass and surrounded by thick short pine trees. He gently broke a bundle of pine branches, set them up on one side of the rock, then hid himself and peeped out. He saw eight enemy soldiers about to sit down to rest. They had begun to relax as they did not notice any movement.

Then he quietly raised his tommy gun to have a try. "No, I must not use both hands. I would be too much exposed and

so could easily be the loser." He turned sideways, pressing himself closely against the rock, and sandwiched the cartridge clip of the gun in the crack of a stone. He stretched his left hand to hold the gun and clasped the hand-grenade tightly under his right arm. Squinting through the gun-sight, he took aim. "Bang!" The whole clip was discharged mercilessly in one sweep. Indeed the firing was done very skilfully. Six enemy soldiers hit by the bullets were rolling on the ground, struggling desperately. The other two were so scared as to appear crazy, discarding their helmets, showing tangled, dishevelled, dry, brown hair. They stood staring with their lifeless yellow eyeballs, mouths agape. Then they threw down their guns and raised up their hands, jabbering and making all sorts of noise.

But they did not run away; instead, they plunged towards the rock.

"It is beyond me why they still dare to dash up this way. All right, let them come. It'll be easy to capture them when they get here." Just as Liu Kuang-tse was about to take another cartridge clip, something happened unexpectedly. Another large group of enemy soldiers stood up, snorting, from under the very bottom of the rock. Liu then understood that the two who had not been killed were really trying to scramble to join this group. They were all in great confusion, some shouting loudly, others shooting at random. Then someone, very likely an officer, raised his pistol and not without difficulty made them quiet down. He took the lead in coming towards Liu. It was evident the officer seeing Liu Kuang-tse alone on the rock also thought to take him alive. Liu calm as usual thought: "Capture me alive? Come on! See what you'll get!" Gnashing his teeth, he tried hard to press the trigger. But alas! The cartridges were all gone. His heart sank! Who would have thought that at this very moment another group of enemy soldiers stood up from under the trees on both sides, and another man, very likely an officer too, raised his pistol, running and shouting, while the rest, guns in hand, ran over towards Liu Kuang-tse.

Dozens of grim faces and dozens of dark noses of guns were approaching him step by step.

Liu Kuang-tse was calming himself, saying, "Be patient! Be patient!"

The guns of the enemy soldiers nearest him were aimed at his chest, while the pistol in the hand of one of the officers pointed to his head. Should Liu move ever so slightly, dozens of shots would fly over simultaneously.

Liu Kuang-tse and the enemy soldiers glared at each other eye to eye. He felt his blood burning in his whole body; he threw angry glances at his would-be captors. Then, having steeled his heart, he made up his mind: "You curs, to fancy capturing me! Are you blind? Come on! This is after all a life-and-death struggle between you and me!" Head erect, eyes glowing, he crouched on the rock, his right hand stealthily pulling the safety pin of the hand-grenade.

Seeing that neither approaching closer nor threatening was of any avail, the officer now mustered up courage and came forward to do the job himself. He held his pistol in one hand and with the other he tried to climb the rock. In the twinkling of an eye his hairy hand caught hold of Liu's right shoulder. Drawing back, at this very moment, Liu thought to himself: "Is it enough if I were to blow up these few? No, I mustn't die, I'll live to kill more of these robbers." With full force he pushed down the hand-grenade, and rolled to the right side. A terrific explosion rent the air. Smoke and fire, stones and dust flew skyward, and Liu lost consciousness.

When Kuo Chuan-hsi and Chang Hung-chun and other comrades on the mountain heard the shooting of the tommy gun near the rock and saw the enemy soldiers staggering out of the woods, they hastily took up their guns to shoot. But as there was one of their own amidst them, they chose to wait till they found out if he was still alive. As soon as they heard

the explosion of the hand-grenade they took it as a signal and then fired their rifles and machine-guns simultaneously.

When Liu wakened from his swoon and heard the machine-guns rattling away like a torrent from the mountain, he immediately spat the sand out of his mouth and sat up suddenly, intending to pursue the enemy. But when he opened his eyes, he felt as if he had fallen into a chimney — all was black before him. When he raised his legs, he felt dizzy as if the sky and the earth were moving; and he heard much droning in his ears.

After waiting for a little while, he pulled himself together with an effort and rubbed his eyes, but he saw no more soldiers before him. There were only bloody legs and leather boots lying at sixes and sevens under the big rock. Looking farther, he saw the enemy scampering about all over the mountain.

Angry at the sight of these marauders who had not long ago arrogantly shown their teeth and claws but were now beaten so wretchedly, he sprang up on to the big rock, held his reloaded tommy gun in both hands and fired fanwise. The escaping soldiers were now attacked from two sides. Some took off their boots and ran desperately towards the highway, others hid themselves in the rock cleavages or among the bushes, while some slipped and fell on the ground to be trodden by others. The wretched appearance of the enemy soldiers bent solely on escaping produced a queer association of ideas in Liu Kuang-tse's mind. When he was tending his landlord's sheep in his childhood, didn't he see the frightened sheep run in the same way? The only difference was that he was then brandishing his whip to drive the sheep, but now he was using his tommy gun to drive the wolves who were massacring the Koreans. Liu Kuang-tse, seeing now that the enemy had lost their fighting spirit, took up his gun, sprang to his feet, and dashed after them. A large group of enemy soldiers ran desperately from the mountain slope towards the

valleys to the southwest. Everywhere on the ground were American carbines and British automatic rifles.

Liu directed his gun to the spot where the crowd was the thickest. Having fired all his bullets, he picked up an enemy tommy gun and proceeded to fire again. There was one soldier who ran more slowly and was lagging behind. Liu ran up to him and snatched his automatic rifle. He thought: "Now if I run only a couple of steps more, I can surely capture dozens of them alive." So leaving the first one at the side, he continued to dash ahead.

Liu hastened to overtake them, got up after a fall, and in his chase sprang over small hillocks and ditches and trod over the bodies of dead enemy soldiers that lay in the way. Unmindful of the sweat that was soaking his shirt, despite his breath coming in gasps like a bellows, disregarding the branches of the trees in his path that tore his cotton-padded coat, he was bent on capturing more enemy soldiers. At last he succeeded in plunging to the farthest end of a valley where he blocked the escape of a large crowd of the enemy.

At the head a tall soldier with a machine-gun, half stooping, was running all in a fluster. At Liu's loud shout of "Halt!" the man was scared and knelt down with a plump, raising his buttocks as though licking the earth with his mouth. Without waiting for him to lift his head Liu rushed up swift as an arrow, snatched the machine-gun from his hand and, turning to the soldiers who were running towards him, he ranged the machine-gun at them and shouted at the top of his voice, "Halt! Whoever moves will be shot dead!"

There stood Liu Kuang-tse like a wall of steel. No one could possibly pass.

Facing him, the enemy soldiers one by one tamely put up both hands.

Liu swept over the group with his searching eyes and saw that they all had laid down their guns. With a gesture, he told them to leave this spot and assemble on the open ground behind them, while far off in the wood, some more enemy

soldiers were still fleeing for their lives. Liu raised his machine-gun and fired away in the direction of the wood. The captives before him were so terrified they covered their heads; they looked stunned and trembled all over — making not so much as a move.

Liu figured that those who had escaped might conspire with their men and return with reinforcements. He thought he should take the prisoners with him at once. But what about the many guns on the ground? It would be difficult to take them along with his captives. "Yes, we want men, and not guns." Having made up his mind, he shouted, "Forward, up the mountain!" They were still staring with their round eyes. There was alarm on their faces and they were afraid to stir at all. Now for the first time Liu was aware that the soldiers really did not understand Chinese. What should he do? More delay and they surely would get reinforcements. In a flash, he suddenly recalled that he still had in his pocket a few English language handbills that he had brought over from across the river for the prisoners to read. So he took out a handful of these circulars, and after pulling another hand-grenade from his waist and holding it in his hand lest the captives should make use of the opportunity to do some mischief, he threw the handbills among them. After they had picked up the circulars and looked at them, some of the men showed a little natural expression on their faces, some mumbled a few words. From their attitude Liu Kuang-tse knew that they understood the meaning of the handbills, and so he had more confidence in leading away his prisoners. But though his captives looked less scared yet they did not move, they still did not understand the meaning of "Forward!" He thought: "Maybe there are some of Syngman Rhee's bandit soldiers here who might serve as interpreters, and perhaps some of the enemy soldiers know a few Korean words." So he pointed to our mountain and shouted at the top of his voice, "*Baiika, baii, baiika*" (meaning "march," "quick march"). Sure enough, they understood Liu's intention. They

all stood up, one by one, put up both hands high, and marched in two rows towards the north. Liu Kuang-tse, holding the tommy gun in one hand and the hand-grenade in the other, escorted the large crowd of captives towards the mountain-top.

When Kuo Chuan-hsi and Chang Hung-chun opened fire at the top, Squad Leader Liu Chung also rushed up from the slope behind. They fired fiercely at the enemy near the big rock until the marauders ran farther and farther off. When their objective had disappeared, they stopped shooting.

After waiting for a good while without seeing Liu Kuang-tse come back, all grew worried. Should they go down to look for him? But their task was to guard the mountain to check the enemy on Sulmasan Mountain from escaping this way. Later, when the battalion headquarters ordered them to move to a new position, they still had no definite information about Liu Kuang-tse. Their anxiety increased and Liu Chung felt especially heavy-hearted.

Liu Chung was going to report to his superiors to suggest sending someone to look for Liu Kuang-tse. Just as he was calling Kuo Chuan-hsi, a rustling noise suddenly came from the trees on the slope. He looked down and saw a large number of enemy soldiers emerging from the bushes. Kuo Chuan-hsi raised his machine-gun and cried, "The enemy are coming up. Let us fire!" Liu Chung hastened to hold him back, saying, "Don't fire, you see. . . ."

All looked down the slope. There were the captives, each with both hands held high. Some had injured heads and faces covered with blood; others had wounded hands in improvised slings around their necks; some had no shoes on and hobbled along barefoot. Those at the head seeing the battle formation on the mountain were frightened so much that they knelt down again. "What's happened?" The men on the top were wondering, when they saw Liu Kuang-tse, tommy gun in hand, coming up from the rear and shouting, "*Baiika! Baii, baiika!*" Now everything was clear!

Chang Hung-chun was the first to run forward to embrace Liu Kuang-tse. His childlike eyes were filled with tears of joy. Scrutinizing his group leader from head to foot, he found Liu's face burned dark here and yellow there by the smoke and fire, and his body and shoulders were spotted with blood.

All surrounded Liu in great excitement. Liu Chung grasped Liu's hand tight as if they had been separated for many years, looking straight into his eyes. Chang Hung-chun turned round and round and kept asking, "Group Leader, are you wounded? Let us hurry to dress your wounds."

Liu Kuang-tse smiled gently and rubbed his fingers over his clothes saying, "The blood is the enemy's. I am not wounded." He felt relaxed and relieved. He wanted to sit down for a rest. Liu Chung hastily passed the water flask to him while other comrades supported him under the arms.

Chang Hung-chun again asked him admiringly, "Group Leader, how did you manage to capture so many enemy soldiers single-handed?"

Kuo Chuan-hsi opened his mouth wide and asked laughingly, "Liu Kuang-tse, was it easy to lick the enemy?"

After drinking some water Liu answered quietly, "It's nothing! It's easy enough."

Just then, Hsu Li-tang was reporting to the comrades the result of his inspection. "The total number of captives is 63. They all belong to the British 29th Brigade."

THE MAN WHO IS BRAVE AND WISE

WANG CHIH-TENG

Kuo En-chih, born in 1927, is a native of Tientsun Village, Jenchiu County, Hopei Province. He joined the Chinese People's Liberation Army in June 1945 and in December 1946 became a member of the Chinese Communist Party. He joined the Chinese People's Volunteers in 1951, serving successively as squad leader, platoon leader and company commander. Owing to his bravery and resourcefulness in commanding the troops of his company in the battle near Chulwon County during the Fifth Campaign, he was given, on September 26, 1952, a special-class merit and the title of Hero of the First Class by the CPV Command. The Standing Committee of the Supreme People's Assembly of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea also awarded him an Order of Freedom and Independence, Second Class, National Flag Order, Third Class, and Order of Military Merit. He was elected deputy to China's First National People's Congress and attended its first session in September 1954 and also its second session in July 1955.

— EDITOR

A detail of the Chinese People's Volunteers, having climbed over a mountain, marched into a valley; the rain that fell the whole night through had at last ceased. Day was dawning. In the valley carpeted with rich verdure, big pine trees

towered into the sky and the mountain ranges were enveloped in a thin mist floating gently in the air. Out of the morning mist, trees, rocks and mountain peaks, big and small, were slowly taking shape.

Kuo En-chih, commander of the 8th Company, was standing on a grassy plot in the valley, his youthful face betraying fatigue. He was drenched by the heavy downpour, his clothes soaked through, and he could not help shivering in the morning breeze. He turned around and saw the fighters utterly exhausted, lying here and there on the grass. It had been 40 days! Ever since our troops had succeeded in breaking through the enemy's defence line along the Imjin River and started the Fifth Campaign, Kuo's company had been fighting and marching almost daily. Last night they trudged along over poor roads in the heavy rain and were spattered all over with mud. When they came to the valley and heard that they could now take a rest, they felt as if they had come to their own snug barracks. Some lying there on the grass, others sitting with their backs reclining against big rocks or trees, they were quite comfortable, but the moment they closed their eyes they dozed off. Tired, truly the fighters were tired! Yet they endured all and this time they came through too. Kuo En-chih was deeply moved. Rubbing his swollen eyes he bestirred himself and walked to the 2nd Platoon where he caught sight of Feng Ho, deputy leader of the 4th Squad, lying with closed eyes against a crag. "Feng Ho, aren't you cold?" he asked in a low voice.

"No!" replied Feng sitting up with a jerk as he heard the voice of the company commander.

"Thoroughly drenched, and yet you say you aren't feeling cold!"

"Ha-ha . . ." said Feng, his eyes beaming with a smile, "Company Commander, of course I feel rather cold but in my heart I am burning with enthusiasm."

The company commander blinked his eyes and a sense of pride filled his heart; "See, what a fighter he is!" he was

saying to himself, and then feeling anxious for the man's health, told him to keep moving about a bit so as to avoid catching cold. While saying this, he turned briskly in the direction of the 1st Platoon.

"Comrades, are you tired?" he asked in a loud voice.

"No," the fighters answered in unison.

"We did not walk much last night, did we?" Kuo said, changing the subject.

"Mmm, not much, but still quite a long way," the fighters responded, glad to see their commander with them.

Kuo was also pleased to be with his men, having some fun together. And so, with their talking, laughing, joking and even coughing, for laughing made the company commander cough much, the weariness of the night was dispelled. While they were thus enjoying themselves, a messenger came from the battalion headquarters and reported:

"Comrade Company Commander, the battalion commander wants you to go and see him immediately!"

"Where is he?"

The messenger pointed to the pine-covered hill diametrically opposite. Kuo in high spirits turned around and said challengingly to the messenger, "Hey, let's run a race and see who can run faster!"

"Righto-o!" The moment the messenger started, he was already seven or eight steps ahead.

"Ah, you messengers are truly good runners!" So saying Kuo mustered his full strength and caught up close behind him.

At all times Kuo mixed well with the fighters. Chatting, laughing, telling stories, and wrestling, he was jolly even in battle. He was gifted with a ready tongue; whatever he had to say, it was sure to be novel and interesting. Whenever he went, there the fighters' spirit would be kindled. During their march that whole night he trudged along the muddy mountain path and felt his soles aching all the time. Those cursed pebbles somehow kept slipping into his straw sandals. So he raised his foot and felt it with his hand in the dark

night. Sure enough the sole was worn out! And it was so with the other one. Both sandals were falling apart. Therefore he decided to do away with them altogether so as to walk more conveniently. Early in the morning someone asked of him, "Company Commander, what kind of shoes are you wearing?" Kuo bent over to take a look. Mmm! From the calf to the sole, his legs were all covered with mud, but he laughed and said, "These are my boots, bright and shiny!" The fighters burst out laughing. All, including the battalion commander himself, really liked this indefatigable and able man.

To reach the battalion headquarters, Kuo had to thread his way through thick trees and bushes as he climbed to the hilltop in one breath. Battalion Commander Chang and some other company commanders were already there; spread out before them was a war map marked with black spots, big and small, and covered with curved lines and coloured arrowheads. Kuo had barely time to recover his breath before he saw the battalion commander in all seriousness take a red pencil and mark three circles on the map. Pointing with his hand to the mountains facing them, the battalion commander said, "Look, in the foreground is Height 255.1, and to its left is located a ridge called Height 200 while to its right is located a nameless height. Do you all get it?"

Kuo squinted his eyes and saw in the distance mountain ranges extending both ways from Height 255.1, one towards the east and the other towards the south with two narrow highways winding below them. On the east was Height 200 which, because of its gentle slope, was covered with a thick growth of pines and other trees; the nameless height on the south was full of big and small precipices and looked like a tiger's paw held upwards, while Height 255.1, the main peak, had the shape of a tiger's head. Kuo was observing and studying the mountainous terrain while the battalion commander continued:

"This strip of land is the defence line of our regiment, and we shall hold the line as long as our strategy demands." Then

gazing with solemn eyes at the peak opposite him and waving his arm to add force to his words, he pointed out, "This mountain is not high, but its position is important. Look! The T-shaped highway in front leads to Yonchon, the enemy's base, in the south and to the Chulwon area in the northeast. So this place gives us control over the enemy's movements." After a pause, he continued, "On the far side of Chulwon is where our two highways converge, and it is the lifeline of our east-west communication. Enemy troops will attempt to take this peak so that they can press on to Kotaesan, occupy Chulwon and then cut the highway in order to block our line of supplies and with that realize their still greater ambition. . . ."

The battalion commander threw a penetrating glance at Kuo En-chih as if to ask: "Do you understand it all? What do you think of it?" Kuo knew not what to think; he felt that since his coming to Korea, his contribution to the peoples of Korea and his native country had not been very great. Though he had fought several battles and captured enemy guns and soldiers, he merely fulfilled the mission of helping out brother units to complete their fighting assignments. Take the defence of Saknyong for example! He and his men had heard guns roaring all the time but no enemy troops were ever caught sight of. Only a few days before, they had been attacking Hwayasan together with the 7th Company. They had not yet begun fighting when the enemy started to run away, and that wasn't much fun! He glanced at the battalion commander's thoughtful face, and was just going to say something when the battalion commander took the initiative:

"If we don't smash the enemy's so-called 'magnetic tactics' here, so as to allow our own units ample time to prepare for combat, our position may be threatened!" The battalion commander then said to him in a serious manner: "The Battalion Communist Party Committee has decided to give the assignment of defending Height 255.1 to the 8th Company."

"Yes, Comrade Battalion Commander!" Kuo responded and was so happy on hearing the word "eighth" that he jumped

up, his youthful lively face flushing. He felt that he had within him many things to say, and yet was unable to say anything. The battalion commander fully understood Kuo's mind. He knew well the qualities of this young commander of twenty-five: bold, courageous, sagacious and tactful. If he was entrusted with a mission, he would go through fire and water to fulfil it without the least hesitation. Doubtless he could take up this important assignment, yet the battalion commander wanted to be doubly sure and felt the need of talking it over in detail. When the conference was over, he asked Kuo to stay.

"This is a weighty mission; do you think you can shoulder it?"

"Why not? Surely it can be done. Even if it were heavier, we could take it up too," Kuo En-chih answered confidently.

"Well," the battalion commander laughed, and went on saying, "we must not consider it too easy, too simple. What is needed in a battle? Courage, I think you quite understand that. But there is something else: we need not only courage but also wisdom to fight the enemy. We should find out and be well acquainted with the enemy's ways of doing things. . . ."

"Find out and be well acquainted with the enemy's ways of doing things," Kuo repeated in his mind, listening to the battalion commander's every word attentively.

"Yes, you must be thoroughly conversant with the enemy's tactics and see through their tricks, only then can victory be assured. In analysing a given situation, use your brains and think things over, and try to co-ordinate all the factors. You get me?" The battalion commander grasped Kuo's hand, adding: "Remember these things and then you'll find a solution to whatever difficulty you meet."

Kuo felt a flow of warmth and strength in his hand. He bade farewell to the battalion commander and went downhill hurriedly.

When he got back to the valley where his men were having their rest, he told them what they were to do. After that the

cook brought their meal. Holding the rice bowl in his hand he began to eat, but many problems crowded in upon his mind. Now he knit his brows, and then he felt relieved again. He did not realize that he had finished three bowls of rice until he felt his stomach to be quite full. But he had not the least idea how the food tasted. Putting the bowl down he called the leader of the 1st Platoon: "Wang Yung-yi!"

"Here!" a tall man at the side answered.

"Let us go to have a look at the surroundings."

So the two cut across the green grassland, threaded their way through the dense pine forest and from the main peak walked along Height 200; then they proceeded down the mountains to the side of the highway, and later returned to the main peak again. All along the way Kuo En-chih carefully noted the terrain, often muttering something to himself. They also walked about in the vicinity of the nameless height and the main peak and even looked at every tree and stone. Then turning to the platoon leader he asked, "Say, Platoon Leader, how would you do it if you were assigned to attack these heights?"

"Didn't you say that we were to defend them?" the platoon leader asked, looking at his face surprisedly. He did not know what the company commander had in mind.

Kuo said smiling, "If you are told to attack, attack you must."

"Mmm!" Wang Yung-yi studied the mountains carefully and thought for a while before he said, "If I were to attack, I'd first attack Height 200."

"Why?"

"Why?" the platoon leader moved two steps forward and, pointing to the height, said, "Height 200, with its steep slopes, lies near the highway, and then there are pine trees down below. . . ."

"Ha-ha, that's the point." Kuo laughed heartily, for he had had the same idea. "You are right," he said. "Attack Height 200 first. The enemy would surely do likewise."

Like many an experienced commander Kuo would probe the mind of an enemy commander. If the enemy troops were to attack Height 200 and be repulsed, they would surely attack the nameless height. Then there came to him another thought that the enemy might take a third step: if they were repulsed on both sides, they would probably launch attacks on the entire front. The more he thought about this, the more he felt he was in the right and his heart was greatly lightened. Rather unconsciously he uttered these words in a loud tone: "Mmm! No mistake! The enemy would do it this way."

With this problem solved, Kuo felt more assured, a gentle smile playing about his lips. He made the following decision: The 2nd Platoon was to hold Height 200; the 1st Platoon was to stay on the nameless height; as for the 3rd Platoon, it was to remain on the main peak to serve as a mobile force to meet any emergency. And he conceived the idea of bringing this matter up to the enlarged meeting of the committee of the Party branch for a final joint decision on the plans and arrangements. After some exchange of opinions with the leader of the 1st Platoon, he strode towards the company headquarters. . . .

* * *

At dawn, on June 5, 1951, an indistinct roaring of guns was heard from afar. With the exception of those on sentry duty, the fighters were all sound asleep in the dug-outs. Kuo En-chih, who had not had sleep for a whole day and a night, should have got some rest by now, but he could not sleep a wink. He reclined on an ammunition box in front of the telephone and kept his eyes wide open. Listening carefully he heard the booming of guns come nearer and nearer. He looked at his watch and it was past five, the time for the enemy to be active! Instantly he roused himself, wiping his face energetically with his hands, and murmured half aloud: "This won't do! It would be sheer blindness to take action if

I don't know what is happening outside." So saying he stood up and went out of the shelter.

The day was gradually brightening and high above in the blue sky were scattered a few twinkling morning stars. In the east, clouds of purple and brownish tint were gathering, pierced by golden rays of light which painted the horizon in brilliant colours of orange and gold. The nascent glory of the heavens at the peep of day lent the early summer morning exceptional beauty and splendour. Company Commander Kuo En-chih stood atop the main peak, his hands patting his uniform moistened by the morning mist. He gazed fixedly towards the front. Teng Chun-ying, his deputy, came along with a group of scouts and hurriedly reported to Kuo En-chih:

"Company Commander, the enemy troops are not far from the lowland, and there are two companies of them."

Kuo immediately sent a messenger to tell the 2nd Platoon to get ready for action, while the 1st Platoon was told not to fire and make their presence known. He had just finished giving these directions when mortar shells roared overhead and crashed into the pine forest, raising columns of smoke. The enemy's artillery kept up a continuous barrage at the 2nd Platoon's positions. Boom, boom, and boom! The mountain-top was enveloped in palls of smoke. The frantic enemy poured tons of steel onto Height 200. The tops of the pine trees were chopped off and the earth ploughed up. But as soon as the gunfire ceased, the men of the 2nd Platoon, whom the enemy supposed were "already exterminated," came out of their shelters safe and sound.

Over two companies of enemy troops crossed a stream about 300 metres away. They penetrated into the pine forest to appear soon afterwards on the other side, some carrying rifles, others heavy ammunition boxes. Crawling upwards they all looked like clumsy pigs, gasping and panting for breath all the time, but they had not the least idea of what was in store

for them, for they seemed to take it for granted that they would encounter no resistance in advancing up the mountain.

"Ah! The enemy soldiers are coming to us with gifts . . ." Feng Ho, deputy leader of the 4th Squad, said as he held his machine-gun in readiness, aiming downwards at the invaders. "Rat-tat-tat-tat . . ." a burst of machine-gun bullets zipped through the air as the direction "Fire" was given by Political Instructor Su Wen-lu. Following that, the fighters hurled a number of hand-grenades, and amidst the successive explosions, the enemy took to their heels. Feng Ho now jumped out of the trench and holding his machine-gun fired at the enemy troops who ran away higgledy-piggledy in all directions. At that moment, Su Wen-lu signalled with his hand and then the mortars discharged a volley of shells which exploded along the edge of the pine forest. Some ten soldiers who had run faster than the others were just in time for the explosion, falling prostrate on the ground. So the detachment of enemy troops who had started the offensive with some show of striking power fell back pell-mell to the foot of the mountain.

"Bravo! You have fought a good battle, you have done well! Beat the cowards hard and let not a single one of them go back!" So Kuo En-chih was shouting on the hill-top. In battles his voice sounded especially resonant and was to be heard everywhere he went, his battle cries continuing as long as the fighting lasted.

When the soldiers of the 2nd Platoon heard the company commander's voice, they were infused with all the more life and spirit and repulsed the enemy's onslaughts one after the other. As soon as the roaring of the guns stopped, Li Lin, the small signalman, with his bugle tied to his waist belt, came up panting to report:

"Company Commander, I was ordered by the political instructor to come to report to you the conditions of the 2nd Platoon. . . ." When Li finished, Kuo smiled and nodded, and then went into the shelter where he took up the receiver to

report to the battalion commander whose voice sounded very clear on the telephone.

". . . Fifty to sixty enemy soldiers killed? Fine! That's fine! But you have to use your brains all the more, for the enemy will launch new attacks. . . ."

"You needn't worry, Battalion Commander. Even if it were a regiment, we'll have a way to deal with them!" Kuo replied in high spirits. Though the entire company now consisted of only some 40 men after 40 days of marching and battling, the company commander felt certain that victory was in hand.

"You should be not only brave but also vigilant," the battalion commander reminded him on the telephone. "You have to keep sober after a victorious battle, understand? I mean, comrade, we have still to be cautious." The battalion commander paused for a moment and then continued, "Hey, the political instructor has something to tell you."

"The enemy gunfire is very intense," the instructor said. "You have to kill not only a lot of enemy soldiers but also to preserve the manpower of your own unit. And tell me, what difficulties do you have?"

"No difficulties; we can surely fulfil our duty. Only we have run short of bullets."

"All right. I'll have some sent to you right away." Then the instructor raised his voice on purpose and, speaking loudly, said: "Inform the men of the 2nd Platoon that the battalion headquarters is recommending them for meritorious service and tell them to strike harder at the enemy."

"Right!" Kuo hung up the receiver.

"Comrade Company Commander, am I to share in the honour when the 2nd Platoon is recommended for meritorious service?" the young signalman asked, blushing and smiling.

"Sure enough. . . . Aren't you a member of the 2nd Platoon? We won't, under any circumstances, forget our Li Lin." And turning his head he continued, "Quick, go and tell the 1st and 3rd Platoons to be prepared for action, and remind

them to follow the example set by the 2nd Platoon. Do you get me?"

"I do, Comrade Company Commander . . ." answered the youthful signalman, who, full of spirit, stood at attention.

"All right! No need to repeat my order, hurry and go!"

Li Lin ran back with quick steps. A little later, enemy shells burst forth continuously for more than an hour, covering the positions with a mass of foggy smoke so that everything became invisible. Then a strange silence prevailed, which puzzled Company Commander Kuo. What plan did the marauders have up their sleeves? In the past he used to feel much disheartened if no enemy troops appeared on the scene. So he walked out of the shelter, stood erect on the edge of a detached bluff, and though the firing continued intermittently all the while, he did not seem to hear it. He stood there observing. Hey! Were those not enemy soldiers down below at the foot of the mountain? They were planning to make a surprise attack on the positions of the 1st Platoon as they, bending low, moved about surreptitiously under the shadow of the mountain slopes.

Signalling with his hand to two of his men, the mortar gunner and the heavy machine-gunner, to come up to him, he ordered them to join the 1st Platoon.

The old machine-gunner Wang Shen-mao had almost lost his patience in waiting for his chance in battle. The moment he saw the company commander signalling to him, stooping over he lifted the heavy machine-gun onto his shoulder and ran forward, saying, "This time I'll have my turn, Company Commander, won't I?"

"Oh, you'll have your chance to fight," Kuo said. "Follow me, hurry up!"

Last night, the officers of the company made a special study of the enemy confronting them — the U.S. First Cavalry Division (motorized). They had superior weapons and the knack of attacking in group formations. "Since they have powerful weapons we should reinforce our defence works; when they

attack in group formations we should make the best use of our gunfire and kill them en masse." Kuo also proposed: "Should the enemy launch attacks on the positions of the 2nd Platoon, the 1st and 3rd Platoons should not make their presence known by any action so that the enemy would not know our total strength. Thus we may surprise them by striking with unexpected fire-power, while at the same time we run no risk of being exposed to their gunfire." His idea quickly won the approval of all. A little while ago, the 2nd Platoon had fought fiercely while the 1st Platoon had not fired a single shot. But now every man of the 1st Platoon was ready for immediate action.

Kuo strode towards the nameless height. As soon as he arrived at the positions of the 1st Platoon, he started to organize their fire-power. Bending forward and knitting his brows, he was observing with his flashing eyes the steep, narrow path before him. He mused: "Come, there's enough for you devils to drink!" Then to Squad Leader Sung Naicheng in charge of the mortars, he said: "When you hear my first shot, you are to fire six shells toward the crowded masses of enemy troops, one in front, one behind, so as to form the outline of a plum blossom, and thus force them to move to the centre." Then turning around he said to the machine-gunner, Wang Shen-mao, "After the mortar discharge, will come your turn! As soon as I give the second shot, you are to fire your machine-gun at the centre in order to drive those damn cowards to the two sides, understand? In this way there won't be many of the enemy left." As he was speaking, he glanced at the deputy company commander and added, "Following this, our counter-assaulting units on both sides of the path can come out to launch attacks and beat back the marauders. What do you think of this plan? If you have nothing more to say, then we'll act accordingly. We'll wipe out all the enemy; we can't let a single one of them escape."

Everything was settled, but Kuo had something more on his mind. To the leader of the mortar squad, he said, "You are an old gunner. Be sure you strike hard at them!"

"Company Commander, my gun has long awaited the chance for action." Sung Nai-cheng had not finished speaking when the enemy troops were seen turning up from the foot of the nameless height. They were moving uphill in extended formation, being now only some 50 metres away. Sung hurriedly got the shells ready. Raising his hand, the company commander fired his first shot. Following this the booming of guns resounded from the mountain slope and shell pits in the figure of a plum blossom immediately appeared along the slope; the enemy soldiers who had advanced ferociously a moment before were thrown into utter confusion, toppling over here and there onto the ground like drunkards, suffering about 20 casualties in this short encounter.

"Bang," another shot rang out. Wang Shen-mao pressed hard with his index finger on the trigger; his heavy machine-gun chattered like mad, firing 150 rounds, and mowing down many enemy soldiers. The survivors scattered to the sides of the path and rushed onwards in two columns of about 30 each. Just then the third shot rang out and the men of the two counter-assaulting units came tearing down the mountain led by Deputy Company Commander Teng Chun-ying. Rifles, tommy guns and hand-grenades poured fire into the enemy ranks. The valley echoed with the shouts of the Volunteer fighters while columns of smoke from explosions rose everywhere. Only 30 or more of the foe remained alive. They were being chased around all over the mountain but they finally retreated pell-mell to the foot of the height.

The enemy had suffered heavy losses! But Company Commander Kuo had his calculations: those who had just been beaten would avenge themselves by more gunfire. So he immediately gave orders for the counter-assaulting units to be withdrawn.

"Go in, go into the shelters, smoke some cigarettes and listen to the gunfire," he urged the fighters and he himself had scarcely entered the dug-out when a strange shrill sound was heard, "Zh . . . zh. . . ." A howitzer shell fell near a pine tree not far from the entrance, cutting in two a tree of some six feet in diameter. Then countless shells rained on the mountain like a hailstorm and the entire summit shook with thunderous roars.

"Let's smoke!" Kuo tore a piece of tattered newspaper and rolled a cigarette. Reclining against a wall and smoking gently, he said, "Fire as many shells as you wish! It will spare us the trouble of chopping down trees to make abatis."

* * *

At dusk, the gunfire gradually died out.

After reporting to the battalion commander on the day's fighting, Kuo sat down on a shell box and kept wiping his forehead with his mud-smeared hand while reflecting on the scene of the five successive enemy onslaughts. He was also pondering on the changes that might take place the next day.

"There will definitely be fiercer fighting tomorrow!" so he was thinking. He knew that it would be difficult for a single battalion to defend a front line of more than five kilometres in length, especially if the soldiers were to be evenly distributed along the whole front. Therefore on some of the mountain-tops only a few men should be placed on guard while none should be stationed on the unimportant ones, which could be controlled by our gunfire. However on Height 255.1 the entire 8th Company was now stationed, though it was only two platoons strong then. The battalion commander must have taken a great resolve to place them there and it was readily understandable, for the situation demanded it. Our men were facing two divisions of enemy troops, so that the disparity in numbers was very great! It was just because of this that the battalion commander repeatedly reminded Kuo En-chih of the need to exercise wisdom in conducting the

campaign so as to annihilate large numbers of enemy troops at a minimum loss of our own. Now the thing that haunted his mind was: what were the enemy troops going to do next? He could not permit them to play tricks behind his back. Though he had already sent out scouts he was still feeling quite restless and could not sit down calmly. He was smoking heavily.

"Report, Company Commander," a shadowy figure appeared at the doorway of the shelter, and judging by the voice Kuo En-chih knew that it was Liu Ming-fu, leader of the 3rd Platoon.

"What news?" the company commander anxiously inquired.

"The enemy soldiers are digging entrenchments at the foot of the mountain two hundred metres from us."

"Ah, those cowards again! Not a bad idea!" The company commander raised his head. The lamplight shining on his haggard face showed its muscles trembling slightly. He asked the platoon leader, "Have you given thought to the fact the enemy intend to finish digging tonight? As soon as reinforcements reach them tomorrow, they will sally forth from their entrenchments. Isn't that right?"

"Yes," the platoon leader answered. "I have also thought of this, Company Commander."

"Hmm! It would be better for them not to indulge in such dreams." Kuo, stamping his feet, walked out of the shelter. To Sung Nai-cheng and Wang Shen-mao, he gave this order: "Aim at the enemy troops who are digging in and strike at them hard!"

Sung had not had time to set his mortar on its carriage but kneeling down on his left leg he fired, holding the gun barrel in his hand. "Bang! Bang! Bang!" and a volley of mortar shells hurtled through the air; and "Rat-tat-tat-tat..." the heavy machine-guns chattered also, spitting fire.

Not long afterwards the scouts came back laughing, guns over their shoulders and clapping their hands. Kuo, looking

serious, asked, "What's happened to you? Swinging your guns and laughing so!"

"Comrade Company Commander, let me report," a young fighter hastened to say. "The mortars made wonderful hits. We in the woods saw that clearly. Our gunners lobbed shells exactly where enemy soldiers were clustering together digging defence works, and after the shelling eight of them lay lifeless around the shell pit. The rest threw away their shovels and pickaxes, and started off on their legs even without their guns. Those who ran a little slower had their buttocks riddled by our machine-gun bullets."

Company Commander Kuo was much pleased with the description given by this young fighter and, patting him on the shoulder, told him to go back to have a rest. Turning to Sung Nai-cheng he said, "Did you hear the young man's story? Aha, you are a wonderful gunner. Wait till the battle ends, and then we two shall have some wrestling matches."

Sung was so pleased that he could hardly utter a word. "When the battle ends, I must have a wrestling with the company commander," he thought. "The company commander loves it, and it's all right for us to have some fun after we have fulfilled our duty."

Evening came and the sky began to turn grey. In the west stars could be seen shimmering in between the clouds, and some sparkled with silvery brightness. The deafening roar of guns had ceased and at the positions was heard only the noise of men making repairs on their defence works with shovels. Everything within the four points of the compass appeared to be especially quiet. Holding his tommy gun in his arms and dragging his feet, Kuo En-chih paced back and forth atop the mountain keeping watch. Having unbuttoned his shirt, a cool breeze blew against his bare breast and he felt quite refreshed. However fatigue began to overtake him, he ached all over, and his head seemed to swell up. He walked on, but his eyes started to close and his head drooped. How pleasant it would be to have a few winks of sleep, if only for

five minutes! But he suddenly roused himself and swung his head energetically, muttering to himself: "The fighters are more tired than I! They worked at the trenches last night and then fought hard for a whole day. Now they are still on sentry duty or repairing the defence works. Compared with them, what have I done that I should feel weary?"

He pulled himself together and wiped his sleepy eyes, saying to himself, "The enemy are attacking and we are defending. They must be more worn out than we are." As he was thinking thus, he got excited all of a sudden, asking himself, "Can't we make the enemy suffer still more?"

"Platoon Leader Liu," he called in a low voice.

Liu Ming-fu quickly appeared before him and asked, "What's up?"

"The enemy soldiers must be extremely weary and fatigued. But we'll wear them out far more yet. They want to sleep, but we won't let them. You take a group of men down the mountain and make a raid on them!"

"Yes, we'll go at once!" Liu Ming-fu was very much interested in this mission, and was so happy about it that he answered in a loud voice.

"Hush! More softly. You must move quietly and swiftly."

"Yes!" Liu responded in a lowered tone.

It was perfectly still all around at midnight, and Platoon Leader Liu taking four men along with him went silently downhill, passing by the 2nd Platoon's positions. Having stopped for a little while at the foot of Height 200, they groped their way stealthily into a forest of willow trees where they found, after a little walk, a squad of enemy soldiers on patrol falling into a doze with rifles in their arms. Leaving one of their own men to keep watch they proceeded noiselessly so as not to awaken the sleeping patrolmen, and skirted the enemy's bivouac where about a company of soldiers were sound asleep, snoring loudly, with the exception of two who were chatting. Hiding themselves nearby, the raiders calmly took time to unloosen hand-grenades from their belts and get

them ready for use. The next moment the grenades were thrown into the midst of the sleeping enemy to be followed by wild screams and dismal howls from the panic-stricken soldiers. Bullets from the tommy guns also rained on the enemy troops who taken by surprise had not the least thought of returning the fire but milled around and ran wildly in all directions like cornered rats. Having exhausted their supply of ammunition, the five men left the place and returned in high spirits to their own lines bearing some captured arms.

From the moment Liu started with his men down the mountain, Company Commander Kuo sat there at the top waiting for good news. On hearing the explosions of hand-grenades and the report of gunfire he readily concluded that the night raid must have been carried out successfully. And so it was, for in a short time the men returned, safe and sound, bringing back many captured arms which stacked on top of each other made quite a pile. Good news of victory followed in succession one after the other. It was really an extraordinary night.

* * *

The night of fighting was just over, and immediately following came another day of battles. Early in the morning Platoon Leader Liu who was entrusted with reconnaissance duty came up with the report that there were enemy troops on the highway. As soon as Kuo En-chih heard this, he started at once for the top of the mountain. A cold breeze made him shiver. Looking south through the thin mist he saw three tanks parked on the highway near a forest of pines and behind the tanks, dark, unending columns of foot-soldiers. Farther away a great number of obscure figures were seen moving about here and there. All these were indications that the enemy were about to launch an all-out offensive. In the face of this new situation, Kuo En-chih immediately did a reshuffling of his forces, dividing the 3rd Platoon into two groups to strengthen the defence of the positions held by the 1st and 2nd Platoons. No sooner had he made this readjust-

ment than the offensive started. But just as yesterday, the enemy got nothing out of it, aside from leaving a large number of their own dead on the field.

"Comrades, let us keep up the fighting spirit of yesterday and strike hard at them today," the company commander at the top of the mountain was speaking loudly to encourage his men, when Platoon Leader Liu came up hurriedly to make another report.

"Company Commander, the marauders said just a minute ago. . . ." Liu had hardly finished when Kuo En-chih asked: "What did they say?"

"The enemy," Liu made a pause and then continued, "the enemy said, 'If we cannot take the mountain by storming it, let us raze it to the ground with our shells.' "

"Hmm! So they're going to bombard us again," the company commander remarked and after a while he asked, "what do you think we'd better do?"

"Let us find shelter," answered Liu. "I think we should give orders for all to take cover in the shelters."

"No! Not that," said the company commander shaking his head.

And Political Instructor Su Wen-lu followed up with these words: "We should not be too credulous. If the enemy really intend to shell this place, why should they make so much noise about it?"

"That's right! I think so too. The enemy have learned our method in warfare and want to make good use of this knowledge to their advantage. For us to take cover now in the shelters would be just playing into the hands of the enemy." The company commander wholly supported the view of the political instructor. He had often heard his regimental commander talk before in this manner: "In war both sides attempt to learn the tactics of the other and it would never be sufficient for us to be concerned only with the disposition of our own forces. We should mentally change places with the enemy and think of what methods they would employ

in a battle. The enemy are, of course, also trying to learn our tactics. But we should have some surprise in store for them if they think they know us too well." These words of the regimental commander remained especially vivid in Kuo's mind. "Right! Let us give the enemy a surprise!" And waving his hand he gave this order to the leader of the 3rd Platoon: "Platoon Leader Liu, go immediately and tell our men to take up their positions at once."

And it turned out just as the company commander had expected. Without waiting for gunfire to cover their advance, a battalion of enemy troops moved on stealthily to the front positions and began to make a furious onslaught.

"Comrades, let's put up a good fight and wipe out all the invaders that dare to come. We are the tempered warriors of Chairman Mao Tse-tung and we'll never give in." So shouted the company commander as he hastened to the positions of the 2nd Platoon. His voice had scarcely subsided when a burst of enemy shots zipped over his head in all directions. His men replied with volleys of bullets that rained down on the invaders rushing up towards our positions. The sound of shooting echoed all over the mountain and clouds of heavy smoke and dust rose to envelop the whole area while the mountain peaks and pine forests shook with the roar of shellfire.

The men of the 2nd Platoon fought ferociously, their eyes inflamed and their teeth chattering; and some even stripped themselves to the waist so that they might use their guns more freely. Deputy Squad Leader Feng Ho, on the right flank holding a light machine-gun in his hand, fired furiously at some 40 advancing enemy soldiers while the ammunition-man kept him well supplied with clips of bullets one after the other. Suddenly a shell exploded behind them, bespattering Feng Ho with earth from head to foot and wounding the ammunition-man seriously, his pants dyed red in blood. While Feng Ho was reloading his gun, some 30 enemy soldiers took the opportunity to climb upwards. At this critical moment

the brave wounded fighter in spite of his smarting pain picked up a tommy gun and fired angrily at them. But a fiercer battle was raging at the positions of the 1st Platoon. Group after group of invaders surged upwards to attack, stepping on the bodies of their fallen ones. Their losses were heavy, for those wiped out by Wang Shen-mao's machine-gun alone totalled more than two score. The enemy's hatred for this deadly weapon was certainly beyond measure, and they were bent upon destroying it. Shells rained down all around it, churning up enough dust and dirt to cover both the gunner and his gun. While Wang Shen-mao was recovering his gun from under the debris, a dozen or more enemy soldiers suddenly appeared before him. Hastily wiping off the loose earth and pressing the trigger Wang again brought his machine-gun into action, sending his attackers howling and tumbling down the mountain slope.... Then the enemy directed their attack at the junction of the lines held by the 1st and 2nd Platoons. So everywhere around the mountain, from the foot to the half-way point, in the pine forests or the open spaces, enemy soldiers were on the move.

"Comrades, we are the valiant sons of the proletariat. For the sake of the Korean and Chinese peoples we must resolutely beat back the invaders," loudly shouted Company Commander Kuo on the top of the mountain while bullets came flying through the air, sometimes missing his scalp only by a hair's breadth. But he seemed not to mind in the least and continued to encourage his men who, fighting bitterly, were greatly inspired by his powerful words. By this time quite a number of enemy soldiers had gathered in front of the 1st Platoon's positions where a most severe battle had been raging, and those on the right side beneath a precipice kept tossing hand-grenades into our men, one of whom was subsequently killed in an explosion. The company commander was greatly enraged but managed to control himself and got at once to the top of the precipice where taking aim at the dozen or more

assailants who were climbing up, he fired a clip of cartridges from his tommy gun.

The situation became very critical. The enemy continued the offensive. Columns of heavy smoke rose up from our positions, and bullets, together with shell splinters and fragments of stone and wood, were flying about everywhere so that all over the battle lines the sky looked sombre and gloomy, with the sun hidden from view.

"Comrades, we have 50,000 rounds left; let each one of these get its victim." These were the words uttered by Wang Yung-yi, leader of the 1st Platoon.

Company Commander Kuo was greatly alarmed for according to their code of numbers this meant 50 rounds only for the 1st Platoon. So he shouted at the top of his voice: "Comrades, let us use the rocks in our defence works to send the enemy rolling down." So the fighters of the 1st Platoon began to hurl the rocks down the mountain side. Sun Feng-chi, wide-eyed, lifted up a big rock of some 50 pounds in weight over his head and sent it crashing down the slope in the direction of three enemy soldiers who were making for the hill-top. It struck the steel helmets of two of them who after emitting a wild scream fell silent and motionless. The men of the 2nd Platoon, following the example of the 1st Platoon, also made good use of the rocks.

The situation was now becoming more and more critical, for ammunition was running short, even including rocks. The deputy political instructor, anxious to get a new supply of cartridges, called the battalion headquarters on the telephone but the only answer he received was a single "Hello" and then no more was heard. Kuo En-chih concluded that the enemy must have cut the lines of communication, including the by-path leading to the battalion headquarters, and that no more ammunition could be had. A volley of gun shots was heard to come from one side behind the battle lines; and soon the signalman and the medical attendant ran up excitedly to report: "A company of enemy troops has occupied the

strategic elevation flanking our rear and is beginning to push on towards the main peak." The company commander knitting his brows held his breath for a moment and then, with a wave of his hand, shouted: "Wang Shen-mao, turn your machine-gun around to the opposite direction and stop the enemy's advance from behind our lines."

"There are only a hundred rounds of cartridges left. These will be quickly spent as soon as the gun goes into action."

"Yes, our cartridges are now most precious and none should be wasted." After a moment's reflection, the company commander suggested, "Leave one out of every six rounds so that only five will be discharged at one time."

Wang Shen-mao did accordingly and fired five in a series, stopping the enemy half-way up the mountain slope. But in the front enemy troops were also rushing upwards. Kuo En-chih, tossing off his jacket, dashed back and forth between the positions of the 1st and 2nd Platoons, firing his tommy gun and exhorting his men. Wherever the situation was most critical, there he appeared giving directions. His men were indeed resisting stubbornly. But they were down to their last round of bullets, and even rocks were few. The brave warriors, goggle-eyed and biting their lips, were however determined to fight to the last man, even with their bayonets.

The enemy's advance came to a halt half-way along the mountain slope, but their number was ever increasing, tightening the ring around the mountain; green steel helmets appeared on every hand. They fired little and slowed down their offensive as they realized the defenders had no ammunition left. Keeping the encirclement tight they found time to amuse themselves by shouts and songs. Company Commander Kuo was very much enraged and said angrily: "It is too early for you to sing of victory. We can sing even louder than you!" Standing erect under an umbrella-shaped rock, hand on his waist, he sang spiritedly and loudly, his haggard face flooding with colour:

We are the people's brave warriors,
And we are steeled in the flames of war;
Whenever there is a call to arms,
We'll fight to wipe out the enemy.

Kuo's men, enraged too, joined the company commander in a chorus. Majestic singing flowed along the front lines and the surrounding mountain peaks rang with the sonorous voices of the heroic fighters.

The invaders were surprised and dumbfounded; a profound stillness reigned over the entire area, except for the singing of the heroes.

Meanwhile Company Commander Kuo examined his tommy gun and found only seven bullets left in the chamber, and for the whole company there were only another six bullets and one anti-tank hand-grenade in the possession of the two leaders of the 3rd Platoon. At this critical juncture, Kuo held a conference with the members of the committee of the company's Communist Party branch to study the situation.

It was unanimously agreed that a great success had been achieved. The enemy had suffered a loss of more than 800 dead and wounded as against the small cost of 14 on our side; furthermore the enemy had also been delayed for two days. Prior to the battle the battalion commander had pointed out that this engagement was in the nature of a mobile defence, the purpose being to delay the enemy's advance and to win the race against time. Now there were only 13 rounds of ammunition left in the whole company and all the rocks had been used up. Therefore the company should preserve its fighting strength and take steps to break through enemy encirclement.

Kuo En-chih decided to act upon this proposal and made ready to break through but there was another difficulty to face. All the paths leading down the mountain had been tightly blockaded by the enemy and in places not heavily guarded there were precipitous crags....

Suddenly gunfire from the 9th Company was heard on the rear flank of the battle lines. For a while this held the attention of the enemy troops, and so Kuo said to himself, "What a good chance this is! We must not hesitate any more! We must find a way out." Then a new idea flashed through his mind: to make a getaway by leaping down from the crags.

Taking his men along he was the first, holding on to trees, to jump down while the others followed him; but they were soon discovered by the enemy on their landing below the precipices. Over a dozen American soldiers, with guns in their hands, dashed towards them. But the 3rd Squad leader, who had with him the last and only anti-tank hand-grenade in the whole company, now tossed it into the enemy troops. Simultaneously, Company Commander Kuo led his men rushing on towards the American invaders, shouting loudly: "Forward! Charge! Kill!" And the enemy were so frightened by this battle cry that they turned back to beat a retreat.

Towards evening our men succeeded in breaking through the enemy's encirclement and reached the battalion headquarters eventually. Battalion Commander Chang, in great joy as well as astonishment, clasped Kuo En-chih's hand in his and shook it heartily, saying at the same time: "Excellent! Excellent! You fought splendidly, and succeeded in carrying out the task of hindering the enemy's advance. The regimental commander has just commended you on the phone."

Company Commander Kuo, full of spirit as he had always been in the past, did not look a bit tired. Excitedly he made this persistent request:

"Battalion Commander, please give us a new assignment. The 8th Company is able to continue fighting."

A DARING AIR PILOT

LIU TA-WEI

Chang Chi-hui was born in 1927 in Chiaoshang Village, Jungcheng County, Shantung Province. He joined the Chinese People's Liberation Army in April 1945 and became a member of the Communist Party of China in November of the same year. He was pilot, squadron leader and wing commander in the Chinese People's Volunteers. In recognition of his exploits in air battles, the CPV Command gave him, in June 1952, a special-class merit and, on December 31 of the same year, conferred upon him the title Hero of the First Class. The Standing Committee of the Supreme People's Assembly of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea successively decorated him with an Order of Freedom and Independence, Second Class, and Order of Military Merit.

— EDITOR

It was on a summer morning in 1951 that pilot Chang Chi-hui made his first combat flight after joining the Air Force of the Chinese People's Volunteers.

That day, at the signal given by the Command Post, Chang and his comrades-in-arms took off in the aircraft.

In the bright blue space they finally discovered 16 F-86 pursuit planes of the enemy, escorting six B-29 bombers, obviously with a view to harassing our rear. Chang and his fellow pilots started a chase at once. As soon as the intrud-

ing planes came within their aiming sight, they were subjected to a hail of lead and steel. The enemy, daunted by the furious onslaught, took to flight towards the sea.

Veering round abruptly and giving his engine the throttle, Chang Chi-hui hung on the tails of the enemy planes in a devil-may-care pursuit. Just then, he heard through the earphone in his helmet the voice of the ground commander calling:

"No. ××. Home, home!"

Chang knew that the call was meant for him, but his desire to down enemy planes had kept gnawing at him day and night so that he would not give up what he considered easy prey. He forgot everything, holding his breath and absorbed in the mad pursuit. Strong air currents sweeping against the body of his craft in fierce blasts made a piercing shrieking noise, yet Chang was still unsatisfied with the speed. He followed the enemy planes out of the battle zone and over the sea until at last he lost sight of all of them. Then he had no choice but to return to his air base.

"Where is my escort?" Not till then did Chang find that his escort was not by his side. He searched the sky for a while, but not even its shadow was to be seen. On his port side were banks of white clouds, on his starboard a vast expanse of the blue sea. He grew anxious, for he had lost touch with his escort. He tried to resume contact through the wireless, but there was no answer. So he had to wing his solitary flight towards the airfield.

Though he could boast of no quarry, Chang felt elated. For once he had given vent to his ire.

The plane landed. Chang had just jumped out of the cockpit, when orders came from the commander requiring his immediate presence at the tower.

The commander paused a long while after hearing Chang's report about his pursuit of the enemy planes, and then said in a grave voice: "You think mere courage is enough to conquer the enemy, don't you? No! Things aren't that easy.

Courage combined with tactics make a true invincible soldier. And how about you? First, you left your escort far behind and fought single-handed without your colleague's protection. Secondly, you chased a big squadron and went beyond the battle zone. It was lucky that you didn't get into a bad fix; thirdly, you didn't return at the appointed time and set my command at naught. You've seriously violated air force discipline. . . ."

Chang flopped down on his cot on returning to his barrack. He was filled with remorse and pain for the blunders he had committed. He remembered how from the very beginning at the training school he had longed to be an exemplary airman. Who would have known that in the first combat he should have disregarded tactics and violated discipline? For shame! What sort of bravery, what sort of airman! Seized with self-condemnation for his errors, he thumped his own forehead vehemently.

From that time on Chang resolved not to repeat the mistakes of his first combat, i.e. to fight the enemy with reckless courage alone.

One day at noon Chang and his comrades again received orders to take off.

The planes flew in formation, as fast as a hurricane towards the battle zone. Now Chang constantly reminded himself to keep in co-ordination with his escort. From time to time he turned round to see if his colleague Liu Chun-sheng's plane kept a proper distance from his.

Tinted clouds floated in the sky. Coming out from a bank of clouds, Chang vaguely saw several dots wriggling on the far horizon. Instantly he listened attentively for any directions that might come from the ground commander. Just then he heard a husky voice through the earphone of his helmet:

"I'm Clock, I'm Clock. No. ××, look out. Wild dogs are before you. Make ready to devour them!"

The squadron leader went into a climb and Chang instantly sensed the commander's intent. He quickly dropped the auxiliary fuel tank and followed in the wake of the leader to a higher altitude.

"No. XX, climb to the left, climb!"

While giving orders to his colleague Liu Chun-sheng, Chang pulled the control stick towards himself. The plane shot up towards the left till it came into an advantageous position. Then he chose one enemy plane as his target and made a sudden dive from its left. Meanwhile another enemy plane was close behind.

Liu Chun-sheng did his utmost to protect Chang. Giving his engine the throttle, he gave chase to the enemy plane that hung on Chang's tail and forced it out of its course. Feeling safe from pursuit, Chang set his mind at ease and tightened his grip on the prey, which the first round of shells had missed.

The planes were whirling and chasing one another. Controlling his breath now coming in short gasps, Chang tried to distinguish the orders of the ground commander amidst the shoutings and cracklings that came through the earphone.

"No. XX, set your mind at ease and fire. I'm behind you, I'm behind."

It was distinctly Liu Chun-sheng's voice. Soon he had the enemy plane's dark shadow caught in his aiming sight and pressed his gun button hard. Volleys of shells burst from the muzzles of all his guns, both big and small. The enemy plane, hit in the auxiliary fuel tank, fled towards the seashore, leaving behind a streak of white smoke.

"You want to get away? I won't let you!" Chang increased the throttle, losing not a second in pursuit.

When he got closer to the enemy plane he sent another round of shells into its belly. It swerved trailing a long streamer of fire and hurtled straight into its watery grave. Huge waves rose from the surface of the sea and swallowed up the burning plane.

While Chang and Liu were climbing out of the dive to look for new targets, six enemy Sabrejets came all of a sudden from between layers of clouds behind them. Volleys of machine-gun shots burst around them. Chang felt his craft vibrating a little in its climb to a favourable position and knew that it was hit. He took a sidelong glance at his colleague Liu Chun-sheng, who made straight for the enemy with a view to covering Chang in his attempt to extricate himself from this sudden and unexpected encounter. While Liu was engaged in a desperate skirmish, Chang turned round and saw two other Sabres aiming their guns at him. He made an abrupt plunge to the right to foil the enemy, who missed their mark but were soon right behind him.

Meanwhile Chang made another nose-dive, immediately shot up vertically and turned pursuer. This time, he held tight his grip on the enemy. But being exhausted he could not withstand the violent vibrations of his machine. His eyes grew dim and cold sweat covered his body. When he had managed to regain his presence of mind, he again caught one of the Sabres on the cross line of his aiming sight and pressed the button. After four shots his gun went dead.

A fierce marauder right before him, and no cartridges in his guns. The enemy pilot seemed to be a cunning fellow; apparently he had discovered his opponent's fatal weakness. He turned his plane round and gave chase at top speed. Chang hastily manipulated his control stick and went through the most irregular movements, now shooting up, now swooping down, now sidling, now gliding. No matter how hard the opponent tried, he could not score a hit on Chang's plane.

Would it do to dodge? Absolutely no. It would certainly lead to terrible results. Only by a vigorous attack could he avert the danger. Chang called to mind the words he had put down in his combat diary: "Bravery will give you what you need." In less than a second Chang made up his mind to collide head-on with the enemy plane.

Chang wiped the sweat from his face, glued his eyes on the enemy, clenched his teeth, increased the throttle and charged his foe at terrific speed.

Now two fast fighter planes were rushing at each other at full speed. The sinister features of the American air pirate were visible. In a second, no, in a fraction of a second, both planes would be split into fragments.

The enemy plane suddenly turned its nose down and scurried off under the belly of Chang's plane. Obviously the cowardly foe had chosen to live in ignominy rather than die.

In spite of his utter exhaustion, Chang still chased the enemy for a while before he steered his rickety craft homeward.

At the beginning of the year 1952 Chang returned to the front after attending the anniversary celebrations of his Alma Mater.

The airmen's dormitory at his air base was crowded with people shouting and laughing so loud that their jubilation could be heard at a distance. By twos and threes still more were coming to this small building. They were talking all the way about the news of Chang Chi-hui's return. Though Chang had been away only for a short time, they were eager to see him and to learn about conditions in different places at home.

When Chang had answered all the questions put to him by his friends, a young man making his way through the crowd shouted, "Chang Chi-hui, Chang Chi-hui, you don't know how we missed you!" The shout of the new arrival silenced the whole crowd.

Chang understood him best. His name was Hua Lung-yi. They had been together at the training school. When the campaign to resist U.S. aggression and aid Korea started, they both joined the Volunteers.

"Old pal, there were some great changes in the enemy's air force a few days after you left us." Then Hua proceeded to talk about the enemy. The fact was that during Chang's brief furlough in China, the enemy military command had sent to

Korea a new group of shrewd marauders with whom Hua and his comrades-in-arms had already had some fighting experience. The enemy painted their planes with various brilliant colours. They were full of cunning, sneaking in and out amidst the clouds, slippery like eels in muddy water. "The other day we shot down one of the enemy planes and captured its pilot." The more Hua talked, the more elated he felt, gesticulating all the time. "Do you know what the captive said? 'You're so brave. You must earn a lot of money.' Pooh! It's they who are fighting for money."

Chang laughed contemptuously and said, "How could he have asked such a question? No sense of shame!"

"Indeed, they are so brazen!" Hua went on, "he fears us, yet he won't admit defeat, saying that they are 'the aces of the U.S. Air Force' and boasting that some pilots of their squadron were 'heroes' in the Second World War. Listening to him makes one feel sick."

These words exasperated Chang. He determined to shoot the rogues down, "heroes" or no "heroes," if only he could meet them in battle.

However, Chang knew that to lick these shrewd rascals was no easy task. Day and night he cudgelled his brains for ways to defeat this new lot of enemy pilots. Sometimes he held discussions with his comrades; sometimes he pondered over problems alone, constantly pulling out his combat diary with its searching questions.

In that diary were the parting words written by the president of his Alma Mater when he attended her anniversary celebrations.

Chang again and again pored over the valuable directions. Besides, he studied assiduously with his comrades tactics and techniques in direct reference to the characteristics of the enemy.

It was the 10th of February, 1952. A thin mist veiled the rising sun; the heart-stirring rumble of engines was heard on

the silent military airfield. Chang and his comrades had again received orders to go into battle.

In orderly and majestic formation the squadron skimmed over clusters of mountain peaks and over streams and rivers that looked like jade ribbons, heading straight for the battle zone.

When the squadron reached the combat area, the sun had risen high. The sky was an immense expanse of blue, so clear that you could see far, far into the distance. The ground commander gave directions incessantly to the "silver swallows," asking them through the wireless to search for the enemy and be on guard.

He looked up at the squadron flying in majestic formation. All the planes were moving in perfect unison. Whether they were ascending or veering, they seemed to be manipulated by a single hand. The pilots scanned the far horizon with great concentration, knowing that in air combat whoever first discovers the opponent gets the upper hand and comes out the victor.

Suddenly, on the surface of the distant sea appeared streaks of white smoke. Some enemy planes were flying up, then down, apparently without any definite course and altitude. Now they skimmed over the sea, merging with the atmosphere above its surface; now they soared into the sky, screening themselves behind clouds; now they came out from layers of clouds in "triangle" formation. Stealthily and sneakingly playing "devil's pranks," they approached our "silver swallows." Chang sensed what was up the enemy's sleeve, camouflaged by cloud and sunlight, they were stealing towards our planes with a view to launching a surprise attack.

"Drop your auxiliary fuel tank. Get ready for battle!" came the command of the squadron leader through the earphone.

Every pilot was on the alert, but the planes of their foe soon vanished. For a long, long while, no traces of them could be

found anywhere. Where could they have gone? It seemed strange.

The leader of the American squadron was Major G.A. Davis, the much boasted "ace" pilot and "Air Force Hero." Having discovered our planes in battle formation, he dared not make a frontal attack. He led his eight fighters westward, and then veered abruptly, trying to make a detour to the rear of our planes and so wipe us out at a single swoop.

As soon as Davis' plane wheeled round, Chang knew what mischief the foe was up to. On the one hand he reported to his leader in code and on the other decided on his method for attack. His opponent already was quite near, but Chang, feigning ignorance, steadily kept to his course.

Stepping up his speed, Davis charged from behind. He came nearer, still nearer till Chang's plane was within shooting distance. Just at this juncture, Chang abruptly went into a backward slide and boldly applied his brakes to cut down speed. His manoeuvre took Davis by surprise. The enemy plane whizzed to the front and missed its mark. This gave Chang a good chance to attack. All his guns at once poured chains of fire towards the enemy.

The rogue was an old hand. Aware of danger, he instantly climbed upward in the direction of the sun, intending to mask his plane with its dazzling light. Seeing that his escort was close behind him, Chang rushed into the fray with his mind at ease. He cut an arc, took aim and discharged another round of shells when he was within 700 metres of his antagonist. The enemy plane shuddered, gave out a gust of white smoke, which, in an instant, turned into a fiery ball, and plummeted sheer in a bright blaze.

The battle went on. Guns sounded like peals of thunder; streaks of smoke, festooned and straight, intersecting and entwining, filled the sky. In this battle Chang shot down one more American jet with bravery and skill.

The air battle at length came to an end. The remaining enemy planes took flight. On a hill slope about two *li* north

of Samkwang-ni, Pakchon County, Korea, an enemy plane was still burning. Amid the debris of the plane and the ashes of the pilot was found an identification disc of stainless steel with the name "Davis" inscribed on it.

Two or three days later all the people of China learned the news of this victorious air battle through the radio and from the newspapers and cheered and sang for our young and brave air force. Lieutenant General Weyland, Commander of the U.S. Far East Air Forces, had to admit that the death of Davis was a heavy blow to the U.S. Air Forces in the Far East, and a tragic loss that had plunged American jet-plane pilots in Korea into deep gloom.

THE LAST DROP OF WATER

LENG FENG

Yuan Pao-shan, a native of Tawang Village in the suburbs of Anyang County, Honan Province, was born in 1930. He joined the Chinese People's Liberation Army in May 1949 and later the Chinese People's Volunteers in October 1950, serving as a medical orderly. In June 1951 he became a member of the China New Democratic Youth League. On September 7, 1951 he gloriously laid down his life in the battle of Chungmasan Mountain in Chulwon County, Kangwon Province, Korea. On December 2 of the same year, he was admitted as a posthumous member of the Chinese Communist Party. On June 25, 1952 the CPV Command gave him, posthumously, a special-class merit and the title of Hero of the First Class.

— EDITOR

It was past ten o'clock in the evening. A detail of Chinese People's Volunteers arrived at the foot of Chungmasan Mountain. The 2nd Squad, which was charged with the task of demolishing enemy pillboxes, continued to plod on, while the rest of the men quickly lay down behind an embankment.

Medical orderly Yuan Pao-shan rested with his first-aid party on the right side of the embankment. He had just attained the age of 18 and was in especially high spirits that

particular evening. In the assault on Chungmasan Mountain, it had at first been decided to let him stay in the rear echelon, but on account of his repeated requests, the company commander and political instructor finally gave consent and let him and his first-aid party join the shock platoon. Now that the battle would soon begin, Yuan Pao-shan's heart was filled with excitement and tension.

A crescent moon hung high in the sky, and deep tranquillity reigned throughout the surrounding countryside. Enemy shells flew over now and then, and from afar came indistinct sounds of explosions. Yuan Pao-san spoke to the comrade who happened to lie by his side:

"Those Americans on the mountain may be asleep, but why is there no action at all on the part of the 2nd Squad?"

These words had hardly left his mouth when a thundering roar arose half-way up the mountain, immediately followed by a series of gun reports. Two searchlight beams shot out from Chulwon on the southeast while numerous flares hung suspended in the air. Chungmasan Mountain was illuminated as if it were broad daylight.

The enemy's shells began to explode at the place just traversed by our troops. It looked as though they intended to blockade the path along which the assault on Chungmasan Mountain was to be launched. Yuan Pao-shan grew indignant and mirthful at the same time:

"Fire! Fire with full force! Let's see whose shells are wasted!"

Another terrific explosion sounded half-way up the mountain. In an instant, three signals, one red and two green, shot up into the sky.

No sooner had the flames sent up by blasting died away than our warriors rushed up the mountain like a whirlwind. The enemy's light and heavy machine-guns spat forth vehement fire; tracer bullets danced about like salamanders. Some fighters fell when they had run only a short distance, while some got up to run again after they fell.

Yuan Pao-shan and his first-aid party dashed forward closely at the heels of Chang Teh-ping, leader of the 1st Platoon. While running, Yuan Pao-shan tightly covered with one hand the water-flask hanging on his hip; it was filled to the very brim with water for emergency. Yuan Pao-shan loved and protected this flask as warriors do their own weapons. Before setting out, the first piece of preparatory work he did was to wipe it clean and fill it brimful with water.

Why did Yuan Pao-shan set so much store by that water for emergency? There was a reason for it. It was on that most critical day of the Fourth Campaign when the troops made a steadfast defence of Hwangkobuk Mountain that Yuan Pao-shan crawled over to rescue the squad leader of an artillery unit who was severely wounded. As he set about the task of bandaging, the wounded man fixed a pair of expectant eyes on him and asked in broken phrases, "Have you . . . any water?" Unfortunately, at that moment Yuan had not one drop of water with him. As he saw the squad leader in such dreadful pain, his own mouth suddenly seemed to be stuffed with a gag, and he could only shake his head slightly to say "No." A look of despair appeared on the face of the wounded man, who with an enfeebled hand pulled down his cap and put it into his mouth to bite on without uttering another word. Not long after, he breathed his last, still biting hard on the cap in a desperate attempt to assuage his pain. That bitter lesson in blood had been deeply implanted in Yuan Pao-shan's mind. Therefore this time before setting forth for the battlefield, he saw to it that he took along a flask full of water for emergency.

Though the volleys of machine-gun fire from the summit swept down with ever increasing fury, yet Yuan Pao-shan was not afraid at all. He was only anxious lest he should fail to keep up with the comrades in the shock platoon. So amid the shower of bullets, he ran hurriedly up the mountain.

"Lie down! Lie down!"

Several voices called to him in the same breath, and Yuan Pao-shan threw himself to the ground precipitately.

Platoon Leader Chang was at heart quite delighted with Yuan's fearless behaviour just a moment ago. It seemed to him that such an active and smart youth, so thoughtful of others under ordinary circumstances, yet so courageous at the scene of battle, should receive due praise. However, when words of praise were on the tip of his tongue, he changed them into words of stern censure: "Yuan Pao-shan! If you persist in behaving so rashly, you will never be allowed to join a shock unit again."

Yuan Pao-shan had scarcely lain down and had hardly time to familiarize himself with the general situation when he was thus severely reprimanded. He could not make head or tail out of why Platoon Leader Chang was so angry with him. So he asked with a resigned air:

"What have I done, Platoon Leader?"

"What have you done? The enemy's gunfire is so terrific, you have to take care of yourself!"

"Then. . . ."

"There isn't any need of explanation. This is no ordinary time. Without my order, you are not allowed to act freely. Do you understand?" Thus speaking, Chang's voice grew a bit gentler in spite of himself:

"There are some comrades wounded in the 1st and 3rd Squads. Go and get them bandaged!"

Yuan Pao-shan forgot everything in the world as soon as he heard of wounded comrades. It was just for the purpose of rescuing the wounded that he had earnestly requested to come to the front in this battle. Now at the order of the platoon leader, he went in great haste to the 1st Squad and, as soon as the task of bandaging was finished, rushed to the 3rd Squad. While engaged in bandaging he tried to soothe the wounded comrades by saying:

"No need to worry, set your mind at rest! The stretchers will soon arrive to carry you back to the rear."

The soldiers were talking in whispers about the difficult situation at the moment. It was not till then that Yuan Pao-shan began to understand why the troops had come to a halt. When the 2nd Squad rushed to a spot about 150 metres from the summit, their progress had been barred by a network of barbed wire. They meant to blow it up but were raked by the enemy's gunfire from three directions. A number of comrades had been wounded or killed one after another, and the troops were now waiting for the combined action of the rocket-launchers and recoilless guns that would soon come up from the rear.

On hearing that others had been wounded at the front, Yuan Pao-shan hurriedly laid down the wounded soldier he had bandaged, and came up to the platoon leader with the request:

"Platoon Leader, let me go to the front to give them first aid."

Hardly had Platoon Leader Chang given him permission before an enemy shell fell on the slope with a boom.

Taking no notice of it, Yuan Pao-shan ran straight forward.

"Yuan Pao-shan, stoop lower!" the platoon leader called to him vociferously.

The explosions of shells were now crashing more terrifically than thunder, but Yuan Pao-shan bending low, ran and leaped as if nothing had happened.

"Kwang! Kwang! Kwang!" A volley of shells exploded right and left about him. Instantaneously he was enveloped in a cloud of nitrous fumes. A lump of anxiety welled up at once in the heart of every comrade.

Fortunately Yuan Pao-shan sustained no injury from the shells. He passed through the curtain of gunfire, jumped over shell craters, and at last found the comrades of the 2nd Squad lying behind an enormous rock.

"Who are you?" someone asked him and he knew from the nasal voice that he had been accosted by Chang Wan-pao, leader of the 2nd Squad.

"Aren't you the leader of the 2nd Squad?"

"Are you Yuan Pao-shan? Come on, quick."

Yuan ran up panting and crouched behind that huge rock. Five or six men were lying there. The face of one was covered with a white towel. The squad leader, bandage in hand, was kneeling beside him. On the ground was a canister of dynamite. Yuan Pao-shan took in the whole situation at a glance.

"Let me help you."

He took over the bandage from the squad leader and skilfully bound up the wound. The enemy on the summit seemed to have found them out, for several machine-guns swept simultaneously over the vicinity of that gigantic rock. As the bullets struck on the rock, "pop, pop, pop," clusters of sparks flew upward here and there.

Having finished the bandaging, Yuan Pao-shan was now anxious about the arrival of the stretcher without which the wounded could not be sent back to the rear. Suddenly he heard groans somewhere ahead.

Instinctively he sprang to his feet, but was at once held down by the squad leader.

"Wait a minute. It is Chen Jun who is groaning."

Just as the squad leader was pressing him down, bullets from enemy heavy machine-guns on the summit swept over with tremendous vehemence. "Kwood, kwood, kwood!" Sparks instantly flew in all directions on both sides of the rock.

Yuan Pao-shan believed that as a medical orderly he must look to the safety of every wounded comrade. If he did not hasten to the rescue, Chen Jun's life would be in danger. Chen Jun was a model fighter in the company. He had got wounded when trying to blast in the teeth of enemy gunfire. So Chen had already fulfilled the duty of a fighter. But how about myself? thought Yuan. As this idea came to his mind, he felt that he should instantly go to Chen's rescue. So, he forcibly pushed away the hand of the squad leader, and crawled along the huge rock to get out.

"Fire light machine-guns to cover the medical orderly." The squad leader set his teeth and issued the order in a nasal voice. He himself snatched a rifle from a wounded soldier, took aim and fired it so as to prevent the enemy from looking about and discovering Yuan Pao-shan.

Yuan Pao-shan pressed his head close to the ground, crawling onward little by little with the strength of his bare hands. When the enemy's gunfire slackened a bit, he sprang up on a sudden, ran a few paces, and then lay down again. Bullets flew about, before and behind him, striking up innumerable spurts of earth. Shells from both sides swept over his head; searchlights were flashed directly into his face, piercing and dazzling his eyes so that everything in front looked pitch-black and consequently he could see nothing. However, Yuan had no mind to note these things. His only concern was to crawl along, leap forth and roll over with his full strength and finally he saw Chen Jun lying motionless before him. He swiftly crawled up to him, pressed his mouth to the latter's ear and said in a low voice:

"Chen Jun, Chen Jun!" He looked for the wounds of his comrade and got them bandaged.

When Chen Jun came to his senses and found Yuan Pao-shan by his side, he said in a hoarse voice:

"Yuan Pao-shan, I . . . I have not fulfilled my mission!"

"Yes, you have fulfilled it. Come now, I will carry you down on my back!"

Yuan Pao-shan immediately laid hold of Chen Jun's arm.

"No, it won't do!"

"Why?"

"The two of us going together would form no small target, and it is so bright on the mountain. I am afraid we shan't be able to slip off."

"How do you think we can make it then?"

"You had better go down first by yourself!"

"What! I go down by myself first? Do you think I came here merely for the purpose of getting a look at you once again?"

"Yuan Pao-shan, you have not caught my meaning. I mean that as I have failed to dynamite open the barbed wire, it would be a disgrace for me to go back now! . . ."

Chen Jun again lost consciousness.

Yuan Pao-shan was greatly frightened; he hurriedly nestled close to Chen Jun's ear and called him in a whisper. On seeing Chen Jun once more open his eyes, Yuan decided to carry him down on his back without saying anything more. Even though the enemy's gunfire became more fierce and the risk was greater, he could not leave Chen Jun alone to get wounded again. As a member of the Youth League, he felt that the responsibility devolved upon himself. Once his mind was made up, he immediately put Chen Jun's arms round his own shoulders, and crawled down the mountain sidewise. In order that his wounded comrade should not suffer any unnecessary pain, Yuan chose to the best of his ability the smoothest places to crawl over, step by step.

Whiz. . . . A volley of bullets flew over. Yuan Pao-shan straightway fell on the body of Chen Jun; his own face was sprinkled over with particles of earth spattered about by the bullets. In a moment he felt a sharp pain in the arm with which he was supporting Chen Jun as if it were being seared by a branding iron. He knew he himself had got wounded. But was it serious or not? He tried to prop up his own body with the injured arm. Well, the arm could still hold. Supporting Chen Jun, he kept on crawling down. All the while he would ask Chen how he was feeling and encourage him by saying, "Set your teeth to endure a bit longer, we are arriving soon."

Yuan Pao-shan at last got back to the rear of that enormous rock. As he had succeeded in rescuing Chen Jun, elation made him forget the dangers he had just gone through.

"Chen Jun, Chen Jun."

The squad leader called gently, but got no answer. Yuan Pao-shan leaned his ear close to the wounded comrade's nose, listened for a moment, and then said:

"It doesn't matter, he's simply unconscious."

He took off the water-flask which was hanging round his body. He was dumbfounded to find it so light. How did this happen? he asked himself in astonishment. He did not know when the flask had been pierced by a bullet and now there was very little water left. Knitting his black eyebrows, he said hastily to the squad leader:

"You see, the water will soon be exhausted by leaking away. Let me have your flask for the time being."

The squad leader removed his flask from round his body, drank the two swallows of water still in it, and then handed it over to Yuan Pao-shan. After transferring the water for emergency to the flask, Yuan stooped over to raise the head of Chen Jun to feed him two mouthfuls.

Enemy machine-guns were still strafing the area with great vehemence; there was not a moment's intermission in the terrific gunfire.

Yuan Pao-shan said to the squad leader, "Comrade Chen Jun is severely wounded and the stretcher has not yet arrived. I will get him back to the rear."

The squad leader remained silent. He was not willing to let Yuan Pao-shan run so great a risk for a second time. But it would not do not to have Chen Jun carried back. So he paused for a while and said:

"Well, you go down to report to the deputy company commander that even if there happen to be no recoilless guns to cover us, we must still carry on our task of blasting. Tell him that though there should be only one man left in the 2nd Squad, the mission will be fulfilled."

Yuan Pao-shan, after promising to deliver the message, laid hold of Chen Jun's arms, put him on his back, and crawled down along the slope.

Now, the enemy's gunfire shifted from the foot of the mountain to the half-way point. Columns of black smoke rose one after another. Yuan Pao-shan was almost stupefied by so many explosions. He drew Chen Jun along with him, crawling on slower and slower, while his own wounded arm grew weaker and weaker. Drops of sweat poured down steadily from his forehead, stinging his eyes with pain like a kind of burning sore. He had the sensation of being crushed all over by an overwhelming burden of a thousand pounds.

"Eiyo!" Chen Jun uttered a groan in his unconsciousness.

"Bear up a bit longer; we'll soon be there," said Yuan Pao-shan, exerting his utmost to crawl onward. All of a sudden, balls of fire came one after another from places at the foot of the mountain, followed by a series of explosions on the summit.

"Our recoilless guns have begun to fire!"

Yuan Pao-shan was so excited that his whole being seemed to be charged with infinite power. He crept along with redoubled energy. Enemy gunfire began to slacken now. He was at a loss to know whence he had got such tremendous vigour, but he at once rose to his feet, and with Chen Jun on his back ran directly to that sheltered hollow where the deputy company commander was.

The deputy company commander was then directing the gunners in firing the recoilless guns toward the summit. As he saw on a sudden a man carrying a wounded comrade on his back running down the mountain swiftly in an oblique descent, he judged it from the figure and attire to be no other than Yuan Pao-shan. He was about to accost him, when a volley of tracer bullets flew over from the mountain and the carrier together with his heavy burden fell to the ground. The deputy company commander unconsciously uttered a regretful "Aiya." He was on the point of dispatching someone to rescue them when two men sped forth to Yuan Pao-shan and Chen Jun and brought them both to safety.

"How are you?"

The deputy company commander called for a stretcher to carry Chen Jun away, and made an examination of Yuan's wound.

Yuan Pao-shan's right leg was pierced by a bullet and blood was flowing down the leg of his trousers. In order not to cause anxiety to the deputy company commander, despite shooting pains, Yuan reported to his superior on the condition of the 2nd Squad, saying:

"The leader of the 2nd Squad is scarcely able to restrain himself. He said that even if there happened to be no recoilless guns to cover them, his men would go on with the task of blasting. Now there are only five men left in the whole squad, and among them one is wounded."

The deputy company commander said, "You have made a very satisfactory report," and after closely examining Yuan's wound, he added:

"You may go to the rear to take a rest."

Yuan Pao-shan was taken aback at this order. How could he leave when the battle was only half fought? If he were to have a rest, what would be done for that wounded comrade who was still with the 2nd Squad? . . . He did not stop to bandage his own wound, but hurriedly expostulated: "No, my wound is only a slight one, and I can hold on without rest!"

"Slight wound." "Can hold on." These words whirled rapidly round in the deputy company commander's head. How familiar they sounded! When he himself served as a platoon leader, the same words used to be addressed to him by fighters in the battlefield. Even he himself could not avoid using them from time to time. It stood to reason that such requests made by the men themselves under these circumstances should be granted. But he felt that at present he could not accord permission to Yuan Pao-shan. The medical orderly was the youngest man in the whole company. But for the campaign to resist U.S. aggression and aid Korea, who could say that Yuan Pao-shan would not be in school poring over

his textbooks? Now as he had been wounded in two places, which proved to be rather serious, he had already fulfilled the duty towards his country and people. . . . As the deputy company commander thought of this, he said firmly:

"Go and rest! There are yet many chances to fight the Americans."

How could my task be accomplished if I should take a rest? Since the company commander and the political instructor had given me permission to come to the front, how could I go back without fulfilling my mission? No, I shouldn't leave. After Yuan Pao-shan soliloquized thus, he spoke again with anxiety:

"No, Deputy Company Commander, a fiercer battle to be fought faces us. I am a medical orderly and a member of the Youth League. As my duty is not yet done, and I have still enough strength to work, I have no right to leave my own post."

Seeing that his superior said nothing, he proceeded:

"My leg has a wound in it so that I can't run, but is it not possible for me to walk slowly? Leave me here to continue my work, Deputy Company Commander."

The deputy company commander was about to say something when the cook Li Chan-chin, bending at the waist, ran up to interrupt him:

"Deputy Company Commander, let me report, the political instructor sent me here to tell you that the 3rd Platoon has turned round to flank the enemy in the rear, and the 2nd Platoon is coming up pretty soon. You are expected to go into action now. The instructor said it must be done promptly."

While he was reporting, terrific explosions from blasting arose in front of the 2nd Squad, seeming to rock the very foundations of the earth. Then the bugle sounded the signal: "Wu, wu."

"Charge!" shouted the deputy company commander, springing to his feet.

"Charge!" All the soldiers got up in great haste; regardless of everything and amid loud shouting they dashed toward the summit.

As Yuan Pao-shan saw the soldiers rush towards the enemy like a flight of arrows, he too got up in great excitement. Gnashing his teeth and disregarding the shooting pain, he strapped the Red-Cross knapsack on his back, took up some hand-grenades and brought up the rear, pushing forward with a limp.

He had not gone far when a shell unexpectedly exploded on his right close by. He felt the earth reeling and whirling about him and then lost consciousness.

* * *

With the tremendous noise of the explosion, the barbed wire entanglements were bombed open. Chang Wan-pao, the 2nd Squad leader, led his soldiers dashing up towards the summit. "Whiz . . ." a shower of bullets poured down. Chang got severely wounded in the leg, and fell flat on the slope.

Chang Teh-ping, the leader of the 1st Platoon, was following at the heels of the 2nd Squad. Seeing the squad leader fall, he took advantage of a slackening of enemy fire to run over to the side of his wounded comrade.

"Chang Wan-pao, go down quick. I'll direct the 2nd Squad myself!"

"Platoon Leader, I can walk all right!" So saying, the wounded man attempted to stand up. But no sooner had he raised himself up than a sharp pain shot through his wound and he lost his senses.

When he came to, there was nobody by his side. He only heard the thick and fast gun shots and explosions of grenades coming down from the summit. He was regretfully cursing his fate to be a mere spectator of the battle fought by his comrades on the summit while he himself had no more strength to take part in it.

A low call came up from the mountain side, soon followed by another. He listened intently, without being able to make out what it was. He wished to utter a loud cry, but somehow not a bit of strength was left in him. The wound tortured him with excruciating pain. He breathed a low moan and turned his head to look down at the mountain side. He was unable to discern anything in the pitch darkness.

"2nd Squad Leader, 2nd Squad Leader. . . ."

Chang Wan-pao heard the call twice from the mountain side. Though the voice was very low, it was a familiar one. Yes, evidently it must be Yuan Pao-shan who was calling. "Good, he will soon come to me to bind my wounds. I should persevere a bit, and utter no moans for fear I might make him feel miserable on my account." Chang Wan-pao, while muttering to himself, looked eagerly down the mountain side. By and by, he perceived a black shadow moving about. He was frightened and said to himself: "Very strange! Why is that shadow moving so slowly? It seems as if he has to make great exertions. I am afraid he himself has got severely wounded; otherwise he would come up much sooner." Chang Wan-pao called in a low voice:

"Yuan Pao-shan."

There was no answer. Chang Wan-pao listened very attentively, still no answer came. "Strange," he thought to himself, "the shadow is evidently coming up nearer and nearer, but why doesn't he answer my call? Oh! There the shadow has lain down motionless. He must have got such a severe wound that his voice fails him because of unbearable pain."

The black shadow was again crawling, crawling and then coming to a standstill only to crawl on again the next moment. As Chang Wan-pao observed the difficult progress of that black shadow, he felt very ill at ease. He was conscience-stricken that he should have uttered groans as to be heard by Yuan Pao-shan. He called to the medical orderly to stop, but the black shadow went on inching up the slope.

Now he could see distinctly that Yuan Pao-shan was pressing the left side of his body against the ground as he crawled along. The flask filled with water for emergency that hung about his neck was making a light rattling sound as it swung in accord with the motion of his body. Chang Wan-pao called once more, but got no answer from Yuan Pao-shan, who finally came up to him at the cost of persistent effort and then lay panting uninterruptedly.

Raising himself up slightly Chang Wan-pao found Yuan Pao-shan covered with blood and could not refrain from saying aloud:

"You are severely wounded, why did you crawl up?"

"Not at all, 2nd Squad Leader. Though slightly injured myself, I can get your wound bandaged." He did his best to look as lively as ever, and said, "Come now, show me where your wound is."

Chang Wan-pao leaned against a rock on the slope and put his leg up to be bandaged. Gradually he thought it very strange: Why did Yuan Pao-shan's hands shake as in a case of malaria? Why could Yuan not get the bandaging done for such a long time? Why had he lain on the ground motionless? Evidently he had got severely injured and his wound was not so slight as he said it was. Chang Wan-pao propped himself up with much effort, trying to find Yuan Pao-shan's wound in the pale moonlight but in vain.

Firmly he grasped Yuan Pao-shan's hand saying:

"Comrade Yuan, your wound is no slight one. I can see plainly that you have got severely injured. Tell me at once where your wound is."

Yuan Pao-shan only shook his head slowly.

"Now, you suffer so much from pain and yet you said it is a slight wound. Tell me quickly where your wound is."

"My intestines have been battered out . . . only I dare not move, the pain is terrible when I happen to change my position."

"Oh, your intestines . . . quick, I shall bandage them for you!" Chang Wan-pao was so excited that he could only speak in broken snatches.

"No need, I have already pushed them in place. . . . You must not move, just let me get your wound bandaged."

"Yuan Pao-shan," a lump rose in Chang Wan-pao's throat; he stretched out his hand to pat Yuan Pao-shan on the head; so many words of sympathy got choked up and could not find their way out. A wound in his own leg was causing him such excruciating pain; yet Yuan Pao-shan, having intestines battered out and incapable of speaking or breathing freely, had made superhuman efforts to crawl up the mountain side for the purpose of bandaging his wound. What enormous suffering he had to endure at every step! What a hell of physical torture he had borne crawling up that long ascending slope! Oh, it wouldn't do to let him perform any more fatiguing work, else he would exhaust the last ounce of his life-sustaining energy. Chang Wan-pao was on the point of ordering him to cease working, when he saw the medical orderly with great difficulty take off the flask from round his neck and offer it to him:

"2nd Squad Leader, there is left only a little water. Chen Jun drank some not so very long ago and left a bit for others. You . . . drink it now . . . it may soothe your pain."

Under such critical circumstances, to have a few drops of cold water is indeed good luck, to say nothing of water for emergency. However, Chang Wan-pao did not stretch out his hand to take it; he was on the verge of tears. It was he who had lent Yuan this very flask; so he himself knew as clearly as Yuan Pao-shan how much water was left in it. Though Yuan Pao-shan had sustained such severe injuries, he had not the heart to drink this scanty water, but had saved it to succour others. No, he, Chang, couldn't drink it even though in sharp pain, when his comrade was suffering far more terribly than himself. Thinking thus, Chang Wan-pao said unhesitatingly:

"Yuan Pao-shan, I can't take this water for emergency. You must drink it right away."

Scarcely had he finished speaking when Yuan Pao-shan, that little medical orderly, young, courageous and beloved by all, could no longer support himself. He fell into a swoon and dropped the flask, which now lay by his side.

The squad leader, though thoroughly steeled in the fire of battle and having witnessed so many comrades heroically shedding their blood, could not hold back his tears. He was sure that he would not feel more wretched even if all the bitterness and suffering he had tasted in his 30 years of life were added up together. He kept on calling:

"Yuan Pao-shan! Yuan Pao-shan!"

Yuan Pao-shan made no answer. Chang Wan-pao was conscious of someone approaching him. He looked round and saw Li Chan-chin, the cook.

Feeling doubly distressed at heart, he cried:

"Li Chan-chin, Yuan Pao-shan. . . ."

Li Chan-chin did not utter a word. He quickly put his ear against Yuan Pao-shan's mouth, listened for a while, and then stooped down repeatedly calling his name. As Yuan Pao-shan still made no answer, Li Chan-chin's heart was filled with unspeakable sorrow and despair.

Now, Yuan Pao-shan, an intimate comrade of his, lay quietly on the slope and, with eyes tightly closed and slightly parted lips, looked as if he were in deep slumber. His uniform, which had already faded to pale-grey by much washing, now was tinged dark-red. The water-flask and Red-Cross knapsack were spread about him in disorder. It looked as though this active, intelligent young lad were still alive. Thus engaged in thought, Li seemed to see before him Yuan Pao-shan with his two thick, black eyebrows and a pair of dark shining eyes. . . . And there was a ringing of the youngster's words in his ears:

"Comrade Li Chan-chin, mother asked me in her letter whether I have some military exploit on record. Now just say how shall I answer her?"

"Comrade Li Chan-chin, have you noticed some other demerits in me? Now I have reached the age of eighteen and wish to be enlisted as a Communist. You must try your best to help me."

Somehow, Li Chan-chin always had the feeling that Yuan Pao-shan was not likely to die. He thought that Yuan Pao-shan simply would not die, no matter how severely he was wounded. The youngster ought to live on, for he had just filled in the blank of resolution to join the Communist Party. As he was wanted everywhere, he would not be summoned by death. Absorbed in such a train of thought, he again called the youngster's name in a very low voice.

Under the lurid light of flares, Yuan Pao-shan once more opened his eyes. He first gazed at Li Chan-chin for a little while and then fixed his eyes on the leader of the 2nd Squad. In a feeble voice he spoke:

"Comrade Li Chan-chin. All is over with me! When you go back please tell the political instructor that I have not been able to carry the 2nd Squad leader on my back down the slope."

After saying this, his dark eyes closed for the last time.

Vehement gun reports and peals of grenade explosions were wafted down from the summit. Li Chan-chin slowly stood up, took off his own lined coat and gently covered it over Yuan Pao-shan's face. He snatched from behind him that piece of grenade which was taken from a wounded comrade, and turned round in a headlong dash up towards the summit.

The leader of the 2nd Squad suddenly rose to his feet too, only to reel about and fall down again. Then with a superhuman effort he stood up, limping and staggering to follow his comrade in making an upward rush to the summit.

REPLANTING LANDMINES

CHANG CHIEH

Yao Hsien-ju, of Tichuang Village, Lingtai County, Kansu Province, was born in 1927. He joined the Chinese People's Liberation Army in August 1949 and later the Chinese People's Volunteers as a squad leader in February 1951, becoming a member of the Communist Party of China in December the same year. In recognition of his remarkable achievement in leading his squad in the destruction of the enemy's landmines while fighting at Korangpo-ri on the western front, the CPV Command gave him a first-class merit and the title of Hero of the Second Class in May 1952. The Standing Committee of the Supreme People's Assembly of the Korean Democratic People's Republic conferred on him an Order of Honoured Fighter, Second Class, on October 25, 1952.

— EDITOR

At Napmok-ri, west of Korangpo-ri on the western front in Korea, the positions of the 3rd Company of a certain unit of the Chinese People's Volunteers lay just opposite the enemy-held Height 159 across a sandy river. The enemy's sentry post was usually located on a hill in front of Height 159, no more than 400 metres from the foremost line of our area of defence. These sentries greatly interested our scouts, who made frequent night attacks, sometimes killing them and sometimes capturing them alive. Utterly at a loss as to what to do about the repeated killing and disappearance of their

sentries, the U.S. invaders had to retreat from one hill-top to another, while we kept pressing forward along these hills till we approached the principal peak of Height 159.

One night in late January 1952, soon after a heavy fall of snow, a group of scouts of the Volunteers appeared on a hill flanking Height 159. All went well at first but as they were coming close to the enemy's sentry post, two flare mines shot up into mid-air, shedding a large sheet of light. The scouts hastened to shift to the right, but unexpectedly someone stepped on a landmine, which wounded some of the comrades. Hearing the explosion, the enemy fired light and heavy machine-guns and cannon of various calibres in our direction. Instead of making any capture, our men had to withdraw because the enemy had already discovered their presence.

The scouts returned by the same route to the positions of the 3rd Company. Immediately after they had crossed the communication trench, they descried a familiar form with broad shoulders and a square face coming toward them. They realized at once that it was Yao Hsien-ju, leader of the 8th Squad.

"How is everything?" Yao asked the scout walking in the very front of the others.

"Once again a landmine was stepped on and exploded, and we took no captives."

The scouts passed him one by one, followed by several stretchers.

"More wounded! A comrade of the 1st Company was killed the other day, and last night the deputy squad leader was wounded, both by enemy landmines!" Yao thought to himself. "The enemy have been so hard pressed by us that they seek to protect themselves with landmines; we must do something to dispose of these nuisances!"

The soldiers having gone on their way, Yao kept standing there. Alone in the darkness he stared at the snow-covered Height 159, lost in thought.

* * *

It was evening. Snow-flakes were falling thick and a northwesterly wind was blowing hard.

Yao appeared at the foremost line of the enemy's positions with his comrades-in-arms. This was a crack unit of five men, all of them skilled in fighting in ambush. They were wearing their cotton-wadded clothes inside out, their heads wrapped in white towels, so that they were white from head to toe.

As they were walking along, husky Chang Chen-chia edged himself up beside Yao and said in a whisper:

"Squad Leader, I know this place very well. Let me be your guide!"

Yao knew only too well why this young man wanted to walk in front. He did so only for fear the squad leader might step on a landmine. While he very much admired this honest young man, Yao flourishing his hand said:

"You're indeed familiar with the place, but I'm not unfamiliar with it. See that you walk behind me at some distance!"

Arriving at the foot of Height 67.2, Yao left Lo Chao-tsai and two other men to watch by the road, while he, together with Chang Chen-chia, bypassed the main route, walked through the wood silently, climbed a rock, and groped his way towards the principal peak.

A snowstorm descended with full force and cut one's face like a knife. The mountain was covered with snow two feet deep. The two men moved forward step by step. In this murky night, on this snow-covered enemy field, one knew not what might happen the next step one took. The task that the company commander had entrusted to them before they started was to capture the sentries and find out about the layout of the enemy's positions. Besides, he had added a last word of caution: "Mind the landmines by all means!"

Now they were groping forward with somewhat unsteady steps. Well aware of the kind of situation they were in, Yao carefully explored every inch of ground they covered. Observ-

ing step by step, the two men finally approached the enemy's sentry post, but nothing was to be seen in the neighbourhood.

"Damn it! They have retreated. Are we to go back empty-handed?" grumbled Chang.

"No!" Yao said in a tone of finality, "let's go on towards Height 159, feeling our way!"

* * *

Day was breaking. The snow had stopped, but a strong wind was still blowing.

Our five men were hiding in a communication trench dug by the enemy half-way up the mountain. Their cotton-padded clothes seemed like so many pieces of cold armour plate. They were chilled to the marrow of the bone, and their hands and feet were numb. None of them said a word or so much as stirred. They were struggling against the intense cold by sheer force of will. They had been waiting here since before midnight, but they did not see a single devil come down the hill even as late as towards noon the next day.

Yao reflected: "Considering the regular habits of the enemy, they ought to have come out long before this time; it looks as if we shouldn't stay here much longer. But could we still afford to go back empty-handed?" Just then what the company commander had said about "finding out about the layout of the enemy's positions" came to his mind and this reminded him of the landmines. It was not difficult to find out about machine-guns and barbed wire entanglements or even to destroy them, but he was completely at sea as to how to deal with the landmines — this new contraption of the enemy's. What were they like, after all? How did the enemy lay them? How densely were they laid? These were the very questions his superiors needed most to have answered now.

Having made up his mind, Yao said to his comrades, "All of you are to keep watch over here, except Chang Chen-chia, who is to go ahead with me to make a search." Forthwith

the two men came out of the communication trench and disappeared into a grove of pine trees.

They had not walked far into the wood before they found a grass cord stretching horizontally in front of them. Realizing that they had entered a danger zone, Yao cautioned Chang to take special care.

The two men were moving forward with light steps when a sudden crash made Yao's heart contract and caused him to release the catch of his gun. They raised their heads, all attention, only to see a goat scampering away. It ran up the hill, but before it could get out of the pine grove it was killed by an explosion accompanied by a cloud of thick smoke.

"There are landmines around here!" Yao sighed with relief, closing the lock of his gun. Satisfying themselves that nothing further was happening, they again started to grope forward. This time they were more cautious than before. As they walked on, they kept their eyes wide open, looking for suspicious spots in every heap of dried grass, every stone, and every stunted pine.

The drifted snow crunched underfoot, and everything was so still in the wood that even their own breathing could be heard.

Having just taken a step with his left foot, Yao suddenly felt his right one catch lightly on something. He stopped walking at once and stooped to look closely. Soon he discovered a yellow wire, thin as a hair, with one end tied to a pine tree. Looking along the wire towards its other end, under a clump of low pines, he found a square green object made of iron, half buried and half above ground.

"Is that a landmine?" Yao immediately grew tense. He told Chang to stand back a little while he himself squatted and gazed at the thing cautiously. Projecting from it was a small cylinder a few inches in length, and from that small cylinder were stretched three equally thin yellow wires, which were tied to three small pine trees, each in a different direction. It must be a landmine!

"Hey!" he turned about and said to Chang, "we've discovered a landmine. You keep an eye on the movements of the enemy. I'll dispose of it!"

Chang stared at the squad leader, bewildered. In Yao's square face his two big round eyes sparkled brightly, indicating that he was quite sure of himself. But Chang knew that Yao's knowledge about landmines was no greater than his own. The squad leader was too venturesome and needed a little cautioning. But Yao looked so determined that Chang falteringly said:

"We've had no experience . . . nor are we sappers. . . ."

"Where does experience come from?" asked Yao. "Even sappers have no ready-made experience in dealing with these landmines! Besides, if you do nothing to this landmine, it will do something to you. Can we afford to look on while it lies here ready to ensnare our comrades?"

But in spite of what he had just said, Yao really did not know what to do. How should he dispose of the mine? Certainly the safest way was to tie a cord to the wire and pull it 40 or 50 metres away, so that the mine might explode without causing any danger. But in fighting or in reconnoitring such a pull would only serve to rouse the enemy, wouldn't it? Instead, he decided to discover the secret about the contraption and get it under control.

Stationing Chang behind a little mound 30 metres away, he lay face-downward and, supporting his head with both hands, fixed his eyes intently on the mine. An idea flashed into his mind: it would be best to dismantle it so as to study its structure. Well, he must think up a way to carry it back to study at his leisure.

He got up slowly, and cautiously untied the three wires from the trees. They were very long and would be inconvenient to carry and, besides, they were very likely to cause the landmine to explode. "I'll tear it out!" He wound one of the wires round one of his hands and gave it a quick jerk; a bloody mark appeared on his hand, but the wire remained in-

tact. It was made of steel. "I'll break it off!" He made several more attempts and at last succeeded.

With all three steel wires severed, he squatted to remove the mine. Buried underground, it had frozen fast. He dared not use much force, but could only feel about to loosen the mine with his fingers. He scraped and scratched with his fingers and after half an hour succeeded in unearthing the landmine, some of his fingers rubbed sore.

While Yao was devoting all his energies to this task, Chang, who was staying behind, broke out in a heavy sweat on his account, oblivious to the necessity of concealing himself, and consumed with anxiety about the squad leader who was struggling with the landmine at the risk of his very life. Upon seeing Yao stand up, lifting the mine with both hands, he now heaved a long sigh of relief.

They carried the discovery back to the communication trench where they had lain in ambush.

The strange-looking object was now in their possession, but it was not yet under complete control. Yao kept looking at it as he held it in his hands. After some time, he said to Chang, "Tell the three other men to keep an eye out for the enemy. I am going to dismantle this queer-looking thing. You conceal yourself and watch me from a distance. In case of success, all of us will learn to unearth landmines, so that there won't be any more difficulty in reconnoitring and taking captives. In case . . . well, remember my actions and how I caused the explosion, and consider it a lesson for your benefit. At any rate, we shall learn to deal with it somehow."

Chang was biting his lips while he listened. No longer able to contain himself, he interjected:

"Squad Leader, let me dismantle it. Being the squad leader, you must still lead the whole squad."

"I've got some experience, having been at it for some time. If anything should happen to me, you, a Party member, will take the men back!"

"Anyhow, I can't let you take another risk!" Chang said in a firm tone, reaching for the landmine.

Covering it with his body, Yao frowned and said in a stern voice, "Go back. Say nothing more!"

Chang looked up at Yao, hesitatingly. On Yao's face, which usually wore a smile, there now appeared two deep frowns above his eyebrows and a tightly closed big mouth. He had seldom, if ever, been so stern or impatient with anyone. Chang refrained from saying what was on the tip of his tongue, turned about, and went to the place assigned to him, where he lay down and fixed his eyes on Yao's doings.

Yao put the mine on the slope outside the communication trench and, instead of setting to work at once, he reasoned thus: "I have seen how hand-grenades go off, and I have tossed back at the enemy the very grenades they have thrown at us; there's an interval between the ignition and the explosion. Now I'll fix my eyes on you. Once you show the least sign of smoking and blowing up, I'll push you down the slope. In case . . . well, there's nothing to worry about. Should a revolutionary be afraid of self-sacrifice?"

Pushing back his sleeves, he held the cylinder with three fingers and said to Chang without so much as turning his head: "Now I'm going to pull out this cylinder!" He gave an upward pull cautiously, boldly, but without success. Another pull, and still nothing happened.

Lying on his face, Chang had been watching, wide-eyed, his heart thumping wildly, and mumbling incessantly: "May there be no explosion!"

Still without turning around, Yao said: "It won't give. Possibly there's a screw somewhere. I'll try an inward twist at first!" He held the cylinder with two fingers and gave it an inward twist, but it did not budge. Clenching his teeth, he held the cylinder tightly with his palms and gave a forcible twist. The cylinder moved with a click! He twisted and twisted lightly. . . each twist meant another risk taken and another string of beads of sweat. . . .

The cylinder was unscrewed as far as it would go. Yao was delighted, but still he could not afford to be negligent. He paused for a little, breathed freely and, as there was no reaction whatever, looked closely, with his head tilted sidewise, at the place where the cylinder and the body of the mine were connected. Holding the body of the mine with one hand, he gave a light pull to the small cylinder. The cylinder gleamed in the sunshine and proved to be something of the colour of brass.

"Ah, this is the cap! All will be plain-sailing now."

Yao wrenched off the cap, and forthwith pushed the mine outside, away from himself, crouching at the same time. The landmine went spinning down the slope with the clatter of a rolling stone.

Yao had hardly straightened up when Chang came up at a run and took hold of him. He would have shouted if he had not been at the foremost line of the enemy's positions. Even so he lowered his voice and called out gleefully:

"Squad Leader, the thing is done?"

Yao heaved a deep sigh of relief and smiled with a nod. He took off his cap to wipe away the sweat on his forehead and looked at the mine at the foot of the slope through half-closed eyes.

* * *

One night Yao started out again with four comrades-in-arms. Yao and Chang each had a pair of pliers, and the three others carried gunny sacks — to bring home landmines on their backs.

It was pitch dark. As usual, Yao was walking at the head. With a willow stick in his left hand, he was probing and testing his way as he walked. He was moving forward slowly when suddenly his stick caught on something. It must be the wire of a landmine.

He called a halt, and feeling along the willow stick he found the wire, which was so taut that the least touch would

set off the mine. As a rule the enemy left the wires loose for fear they might explode the mines as they laid them. But this time the wire was so tightly stretched that Yao sensed at once that things were not the same as before and immediately got very tense. He told the others to take special care.

He groped to the right along the wire, and had not gone far before he found it tied to a landmine. Turning to explore to the left, he walked about 20 metres when, as he thought he was coming to a tree or something, quite unexpectedly he found another mine, connected to the first one by the wire.

"Ho! There's a landmine at each end!" he said to himself as he felt round the cap of the mine, when sure enough he found another wire extending in front to the left. Groping forward along that wire, he discovered another mine! And another wire extended backwards to the left. Now he realized that this was the enemy's minefield, and that there must be so many mines that striking any one of them would set off all and kill those engaged in unearthing them. The enemy's scheme was indeed a very crafty one, but we are not so gullible as we might be thought to be!

Yao called Chang to his side and told him what he had just found. He bade him take another man with him and go to the right along the steel wire to unearth the landmines, while he himself went with Lo Chao-tsai to the left for the same purpose. Taking out his pliers, he cut the wire in the middle and handed one end to Chang, retaining the other end. Each of them groped along following his part of the wire.

Yao was led forward to the left by the wire. Whenever he found a mine, he cut the wire, put on the safety device, screwed off the cap, and handed the mine to Lo to take to a rendezvous under a big tree. Going left and right along the wire, he spent a full hour disconnecting and unearthing mines. Still the wire did not stop, but extended forward and forward.

"How many have we gathered up?" he asked Lo.

"There's already a big heap, including those Chang has dug up and sent back!"

"What's the exact number?"

"Well, I'll count them."

Lo went off, dancing for joy. In a little while he came back to report: "Fifty-two."

Not saying a word, Yao set to work again, thinking to himself: "No matter how many of you there are, I'll unearth all of you tonight!" As he was feeling his way forward in the darkness, he discerned someone moving about; the form of the figure indicated that it was Chang. Well, the two had parted at a certain spot, only to meet again here. It was evident this minefield would be finished with soon. Overjoyed, he called to Chang, who ran over and said:

"We've unearthed quite a few tonight, and not all of them yet!"

"We'll get the work done shortly!" As he said this, Yao uncovered two more and then there was no more wire.

Straightening up and heaving a sigh of relief, Yao asked Lo Chao-tsai: "How many in all?"

"Fifty-eight!" Lo said and, rolling his eyes, continued: "How about 'removing the landmines'?"

Someone wondered what "removing" meant and shot out a question in the darkness: "What's the idea?"

"Eh, to bury them in the enemy's area to blow up the enemy!"

Yao had just hit upon the same idea. He clapped his hands lightly, saying: "That's right. Let's bury them along that path!"

The path was only a little more than two feet wide, not so much a path as a low embankment. It led up the hill in one direction and into the village at the foot in the other. On each side of the path was a ditch half a man's height, filled with dried grass.

Yao directed his men to part the dried grass in the ditches and at intervals of four or five metres lay a couple of mines facing each other. In this way mines were planted for a distance of 50 or 60 metres. Then he himself laid two contact mines in the middle of the path.

Having buried the two mines, he cast a look at them, and reasoned thus: "If they are put side by side, they may not be stepped upon. But when they are laid end to end, even when the first step has missed them, the second is sure to hit them. On a narrow path like this, the marauders will have a lot of dodging to do."

They put the freshly dug earth under the dried grass in the ditches and scattered some dry earth where they had laid the mines. Not until he was satisfied that there was nothing to arouse suspicion and that everything was all right, did Yao give the order:

"March! Back we go!"

After returning to the quarters of the squad, Yao had only a few winks of sleep before it was day again. He hastened to get up and ran to the observation post.

The company commander, who had heard their report the night before, had been waiting there since dawn. As soon as he saw that Yao had come, he asked:

"Where did you lay the mines?"

Through the vent at the observation post, Yao pointed to the valley from which the mists were rising, showing the company commander the exact spot where the mines had been buried. He was talking very earnestly when the company commander nudged him slightly and he quickly took up the observer's binoculars.

Upwards of ten American soldiers with guns on their shoulders were coming down the opposite slope, walking along that path, slowly approaching the foot of the hill. Coming close to the minefield laid by Yao and his men, the American soldier walking at the head kept peering about.

"They're coming to it! Coming to it!" Yao said, pulling at the company commander's sleeve nervously.

Scarcely had he finished speaking when a column of black smoke and a ball of fire rose skyward, accompanied by the explosion of a landmine. The body of the enemy soldier walking in front was blown higher than the stature of a man. The others plunged headlong into the ditches. There followed more columns of thick smoke and more balls of fire, along with more explosions.

It was some time before the dense smoke disappeared little by little. About half of the American soldiers coming down the hill had been killed on the slope, while the four or five who managed to go back could only totter along.

The more landmines the enemy laid, the greater grew Yao's skill in unearthing them. During four months he had dug up nearly 1,000 of the enemy's mines and replanted more than 400 of them. It was something highly exhilarating to annihilate and wound the American invaders with the lethal weapons they had themselves made and transported to Korea.

THE UNDERGROUND STRONGHOLD

HSIA KUANG and LIN SAN

Kao Yun-ho was born in 1925 in Yenchiatien Village, Chiutai County, Kirin Province. In September 1949 he joined the Chinese People's Liberation Army and in October 1950 the Chinese People's Volunteers as a squad leader. In March 1951 he became a member of the Chinese Communist Party. Having twice performed meritorious service in the battle for Height 190.8 on the eastern bank of the Imjin River in the area around Yonchon and as well as for his exemplary creativeness in tunnel warfare, he was given a first-class and a special-class merit as well as the title of Hero of the Second Class by the CPV Command. On the 25th of June 1952, the Standing Committee of the Supreme People's Assembly of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea awarded him an Order of Honoured Fighter, Second Class, and on the 8th of January 1953, an Order of Honoured Fighter, First Class.

— EDITOR

It was the afternoon of the 12th of June 1952. The group of men led by Kao Yun-ho had at last withdrawn into their tunnel after a fierce battle.

This tunnel situated half-way up the mountain was hastily constructed after they had arrived at this place. It was U-shaped and not longer than 30 metres. When they first dug

it, they had intended it to serve merely as a place for rest or a shelter against shells and no one could have foreseen that this would turn out to be their underground stronghold.

The fighters and the wounded men were resting inside and their squad leader, Kao Yun-ho, tall and thin, was leaning against the wall close to the entrance, his face with its pointed chin covered with smoke and dust as if he had just emerged from a furnace. His sharp eyes were fixed on a log outside blasted out of shape by shells, and his heart was burning with hatred and indignation — the enemy had occupied the mountain-top, with its positions which our fighters had defended for a month with blood and sweat.

One month before, when the chestnut trees on the Imjin River banks were laden with nuts, when so many courageous Koreans were ploughing their fields and planting rice-sprouts in the teeth of gunfire, Kao Yun-ho and his 6th Squad fought a brilliant battle in defence of this mountain, in which over 160 enemy soldiers were killed. Kao Yun-ho was given a first-class merit in recognition of his achievement in this battle. But since then the American marauders had been shelling this mountain and bombing it day and night; no one knew how many tons of steel they had dumped on it. The mountain was bombed bare of trees and grass and the much-repaired communication trenches were destroyed. But Kao Yun-ho and his 6th Squad were still there on guard on the top of the mountain.

A month had passed, and an abrupt change took place. On the morning of the day they withdrew into the tunnel, an enemy regiment, under the cover of 12 fighter planes and eight tanks, launched an all-out attack. Kao Yun-ho and his men fought back fiercely; some of his men even engaged in hand-to-hand combat with the enemy. Repeated assaults were repulsed, and the entire hillside and valley were strewn with the corpses of enemy soldiers. Still the onslaughts went on, one close after the other until they were surrounded on

three sides by the enemy. Prior to the battle the battalion commander had personally spoken to Kao Yun-ho.

"Height 190.8," he had said, "is the outpost of our defence line east of the Imjin River, and a stepping stone in our path of advance. You have every duty, therefore, to defend this outpost, but not the right to lose it."

In their present plight, how were they to carry out the battalion commander's orders? Kao Yun-ho realized quite well that to continue defending the height out in the open would put the lives of the entire squad in danger and render impossible the defence of the mountain-top. So he decided to change tactics. He withdrew with the squad into the tunnel and carried on the battle from there.

This step was taken much against their will and under conditions beyond their control. Moreover, the battalion commander had advised: "If the defence works should be destroyed, go on fighting from the tunnel." But Kao Yun-ho felt greatly humiliated at the thought of having allowed the enemy to occupy the mountain-top; he felt too that he had let down his superiors and his fallen comrades.

The image of the 17-year-old fighter Li Ching-shan came once again to his mind. What a lovable soldier Li had been! When he first arrived in Korea from his native village, he had to ask someone to patch his clothes for him whenever they were torn. Kao himself had often done some mending for Li under gunfire and passed on his own fighting experience to him. Li became a dauntless fighter later on. Even when severely wounded, lying motionless in the trench, he still begged for a battle assignment. Kao had to carry him into the tunnel himself to give him the chance of recovering. In an extraordinarily quiet tone, Li said: "Squad Leader, I am afraid I am done for. Still, you must recommend me for membership in the Youth League." Kao Yun-ho did not know what to say to this tough fighter, whose breathing was then becoming more and more difficult, yet who suddenly raised bis fist and shouted, "Long live . . . Chairman Mao!" How

strong was his voice! But little by little it weakened. Kao Yun-ho was unable to hold back his grief; his tears fell on the body of his comrade-in-arms. Standing silently before Li Ching-shan's lifeless countenance he vowed vengeance....

Now at this very moment, on this very mountain-top stained with the blood of our fallen comrades, the American bandits were shouting and laughing. These sounds coming into Kao Yun-ho's ears tortured him as if a knife were turning in his flesh. In his heart he pledged: "The blood of our fallen comrades must not have been shed in vain. We will regain our positions." His face turned the colour of lead and his brows clouded.

He turned to give a sidelong glance at the men in the tunnel. They were covered with blood and mud, their clothes in rags, their faces betraying hatred and anger.

"Comrades," he said to them, "we have annihilated a lot of enemy soldiers at the base of the mountain. From this time on, we will wipe them out at the top of the mountain. What do you say?"

"Right!" The loud voices of the fighters reverberated in the tunnel.

"Right!" Kao Yun-ho repeated. "We cannot allow the blood of our dead comrades to have been shed in vain. We'll transform this tunnel into a fortress. From this fortress at the vital half-way point up the mountain we shall be a great menace to the enemy on the summit. In co-ordination with our main forces we'll regain our positions up there."

His voice had hardly died down when a crash, like an abrupt grinding of automobile brakes, violently shook the tunnel. Clumps of earth rained down from the top and the acrid odour of sulphur came into Kao Yun-ho's nostrils.

"The enemy are trying to destroy our tunnel," Kao Yun-ho was thinking, when a hand-grenade flew in through the entrance and fell by his side, emitting wisps of white smoke. "Lie down," he shouted as he dexterously picked up the hand-grenade and threw it out before it exploded.

Several more came flying in all at once. He had no time to call for help; so kicking and throwing, he tossed them back to the enemy one by one.

There was a lull. Kao took a few steps forward and looked out. From the communication trench several blackish gun muzzles were sticking out, aimed at the entrance of the tunnel. "They mean to bottle us up in here and then take time to finish us off," he thought. "What a vicious scheme!" He raised his automatic rifle and sent a burst of fire at those black shadows. Meanwhile Deputy Squad Leader Jui Chao-shou also threw out several hand-grenades from the right-hand entrance. The enemy, men and guns, then disappeared from sight.

Kao Yun-ho retraced his steps to a turning in the tunnel and as the fighters grouped themselves around him, he said:

"The enemy don't know the secret of this tunnel yet; we must do everything to prevent them from getting in here. The guarding of the entrances will mean victory. So now, let's all get to work quickly to strengthen our defence works."

Chang Cheng-en, a tough fighter, had been seriously injured in defending the mountain-top. No sooner had he heard what Kao Yun-ho said than he hobbled up to the squad leader, as he dragged his wounded leg behind him:

"Squad Leader, let me guard the entrance while the others build the defence works."

Kao Yun-ho, knowing well the seriousness of Chang's wound, was reluctant to assign him any duty at all. "You are wounded," he told Chang. "You had better stay where you are."

Chang listened and looked as if he had an unending stream of reasons to offer. "I have a good appetite, I am able to walk about," he interrupted. "What's more, I can throw hand-grenades. Is it fair to count me out as a disabled man? Squad Leader, by all means, give me this task and I swear I'll make a good job of it."

Deeply moved by his militant enthusiasm, Kao Yun-ho gave in.

With the exception of the guards at the entrances, everyone immediately went to work with a vengeance. They got out grain bags, found wood, spades, pickaxes and set about hewing pieces of wood, filling in earth, erecting walls and in a short time they completed two emplacements at the two turnings in the tunnel. They also got out some cotton-padded jackets and after soaking them in water, piled them over the emplacements the better to withstand bullets and shell splinters. The squad was reorganized into three groups; two were to guard the two entrances, one on the right and the other on the left, respectively under the direction of himself and his deputy. The third group was to care for the seriously wounded men inside the tunnel and, if necessary, to aid the other groups.

When the preparatory work was completed, it was already dark.

* * *

Since their withdrawal into the tunnel, Kao Yun-ho had been thinking of his superiors. He had been working and fighting directly under their leadership ever since he had joined the revolution. They visited him whenever he was ill; gave him their counsel when he had troubles and when he made a mistake, they instructed him. He deeply appreciated the moral support he had derived from being at their side and they were his mentors and guiding light. But what were his company, battalion and regimental commanders doing at this very moment? "Perhaps they are standing by the map planning a counter-attack; or maybe they are looking towards this direction through binoculars.... Then, they could be preparing to give the order to the gunners to open fire...." From his conjectures he arrived at a strengthened faith. "My superior officers will without the least doubt organize a counter-attack." Thinking thus he was fortified with greater con-

fidence in being able to hold out in the tunnel. "And supposing I haven't much experience, I can always create it. After all, where does experience come from if not in exchange for sweat and blood!"

His musings were interrupted by a thunderous explosion which made the oil lamp swing. He grabbed his automatic rifle and rushed out as his comrades also instinctively snatched up their weapons and followed suit.

The dark blue sky was streaked with fiery arcs of shells flying from north to south. One by one they fell and exploded on the mountain-top. The sky became brightly lit, and smoke filled the air.

"Those are shells from our guns!" Kao Yun-ho shouted excitedly. "Our main force has begun the counter-attack!"

"The counter-attack has come! We'll give the enemy a taste of our strength!" the men cried echoing Kao's elation.

Kao Yun-ho commanded everyone to take up positions in preparation for their role in the counter-attack. At the same time he held his breath, listening carefully for the least change in the surroundings.

Automatic rifles and hand-grenades sounded increasingly louder and nearer. A voice, faint and low, floated in with the cool breeze:

"...Tunnel...above the two pine stumps...."

Kao Yun-ho jumped to his feet and shouted in the direction of a shadow:

"Who goes there?"

"Are you the leader of the 6th Squad?"

The voice Kao heard distinctly in reply belonged to Li Han-yu, Commander of the 3rd Company. His heart almost jumped out of his mouth.

"Aiya, Company Commander. You must have had a terrific time."

Li Han-yu had been in the same company with Kao and had been transferred to the 3rd Company only a few months ago. Now he was here by orders of the battalion commander to

reinforce them with a squad, which, however, consisted of only seven men including Li Han-yu himself, the others having fallen victim to enemy fire. One glance at the company commander's blood-stained and mud-bespattered shoes told that the arrival of the seven had not been an easy matter. These seven men seemed like the reinforcement of a platoon or a company to Kao Yun-ho; and feeling exactly as he did, the other comrades thought of these new arrivals not in terms of a mere handful but of a gigantic force to support them. With great joy they welcomed these newcomers as their dearest ones as they entered the tunnel.

"Comrades," said Kao Yun-ho feelingly with clenched fists, "the company commander has come and has brought along reinforcements with him. Now that he is here, we have our chief guide and mainstay."

A festive spirit reigned within the tunnel. The men gave the newcomers cigarettes and water and served them in all kinds of ways. The new arrivals, in turn, had much to say of the men's valour and splendid performance.

Someone began playing a mouth organ softly and though it sounded somewhat amateurish, lacking good rhythm, the music was enough to arouse deep emotions, and another piped up a ditty from his native village.

The entire group was in the midst of a gay celebration of their reunion when the radiophone operator, Yang Kuo-hsing, handed the receiver to Li Han-yu.

"Company Commander," he reported, "the regimental political commissar wishes to speak with you."

"Is that Li Han-yu?" the receiver transmitted the commissar's kindly tones. "You have arrived safely at the tunnel. Excellent, excellent. Now please convey to the comrades that the Regimental Party Committee attaches great importance to their work. We hope they will continue to do credit to the name of the Chinese People's Volunteers and will resolutely hold out. . . ." The voice of the commissar was interrupted by a crash — a shell, it seemed, had fallen near the

regimental headquarters. There was a silence of a few minutes; then the voice of the commissar again came from the receiver: "Is the leader of the 6th Squad with you? Tell the comrades of the 6th Squad that we have great hopes they will go from victory to greater victory. The enemy regiment which attacked them today has sustained heavy losses. Since dusk they have been carting away their dead by the truckloads and up to now, they have not wound up the business yet. By our first rough estimate, they have over nine hundred dead or wounded."

When Kao Yun-ho heard his commissar asking for him, tears flooded his eyes in spite of himself. He felt deeply moved by his superior's concern. He asked the radiophone operator to convey to the commissar:

"We are determined to defend the tunnel."

The men milled around wishing the operator to tell the commissar:

"We are determined not to let the enemy in!"

"We'll do our level best to wipe out the enemy!"

It was deep in the night. The fighters were all asleep. Kao Yun-ho alone stood guard at the entrance on the right side. The commissar's voice seemed to be still ringing in his ears. He went over in his mind all the training and guidance the Party had given him the last few years. He thought of many things....

* * *

With the company commander now in command in the tunnel the men's morale rose still higher; they devised more and more ways of defence. Time and again the enemy advanced to reconnoitre only to be frustrated by pot-shots from the guards at the entrances. Once, just before dawn a couple of American marauders, flashlights in hand, crept stealthily to the entrance where Kao was on guard. A strong beam of light flashed into his face, blinding him. He reflected: "You people are working rather hard. Daylight isn't here yet and

you have begun. Well and good, I'll see that you are provided with some breakfast." With that he raised his automatic rifle and swept at the dark shadows. One American dropped and the other ran off. Never did their flashlights come again.

The enemy's designs to get into the tunnel were completely thwarted but they did not give up hope. They too were attempting new ways and means to demolish this stronghold.

As the sky was brightening, an ominous sound was heard coming from the ceiling above. Kao promptly reported to the company commander.

"Listen, Company Commander." Kao directed his glance toward the ceiling.

Li Han-yu waved his hand in acknowledgement and put his ear to the post supporting the roof: A thudding as if someone were digging. Hastily he asked,

"How thick is the top?"

"A little over five metres."

"They are going to do something devilish."

Recalling the manner in which the enemy had tried to destroy the tunnel on their first evening, Kao Yun-ho knew what they were attempting to do now. He jumped to his feet and stood before the company commander.

"Give me permission to drive them off."

Kao Yun-ho's fortitude, shown in his contracted brows, reminded Li Han-yu of the time when Kao was leading the 6th Squad in the brilliant action in defence of this very height a month ago. For Li Han-yu, Kao Yun-ho not only represented a distinguished squad leader but a good Party member as well; and he believed that whatever difficulty confronted him, this young man of deep feeling and loyalty would never give up the fight. He at once nodded his consent, adding:

"Take two men along with you. Remember to be quick in your movements and in shooting."

Before Kao Yun-ho could leave the entrance there came an earth-splitting crash and the hot air of explosives rushed into the tunnel.

"Damn their black hearts!" Kao swore. He turned to signal to Chang Jung and Huang Pin-fa as he dashed out of the entrance. Like a tornado they swept away the enemy soldiers on both sides of the entrance with their automatic rifles and dashed straight for the top.

The enemy above who had not been quick enough to detonate the second lot of explosives suddenly found bullets whizzing all around them. There was no shelter nearby nor could they make a stand. It was too late to flee.

When Kao Yun-ho arrived at the top he found a hole blasted more than one-third of a metre deep in the roof of the tunnel, and about two metres away were two corpses with canisters of dynamite still clutched in their hands. His heart was thumping like mad as his thoughts ran: "This is indeed a life-and-death struggle! A few minutes more and these two would have set off the second and third batches of explosives. How very desperate our situation would have been!"

The enemy had tried to enter the stronghold, but without success. They had attempted to blow it up and had failed. So they resorted to another diabolical venture.

No sooner had Kao and his men re-entered the tunnel than enemy soldiers from the slopes on both sides frantically strafed the entrances with their machine-guns and following immediately, two smoke bombs whizzed through the air. Thick smoke close to the ground crept into the tunnel which, in a second, was filled with milky white vapour, so that the men could no longer distinguish each other even when standing face to face. Meanwhile the fighters on guard at the entrances had inserted bullets into their rifle chambers and those inside had raised their rifles into position. At this very time two faint explosions outside were heard, and next a peppery pungent stench struck the nostrils of the men, choking them.

At the entrance, on duty, Lu Chang-ming uttered an "Aiya," staggered and collapsed.

Kao Yun-ho who was on guard with Lu Chang-ming felt his throat scorched as by a lump of burning charcoal. His eyes stung painfully and tears gushed forth. His breathing was becoming increasingly more difficult. In that split second, it occurred to him that once before he had had this sensation in a battle where some of the men had succumbed from the inhalation of fumes. He yelled into the interior:

"The enemy are using poison gas!"

At once this shout alerted Company Commander Li Han-yu, who being an experienced officer had foreseen this move on the part of the enemy after the frustration of their plan to blow up the tunnel. He had told the men to be prepared. Now that he heard the enemy were using poison gas, he instantaneously ordered:

"Attention, men! Don masks! Those of you who have no masks, cover your mouth and nose with wet towels!"

As he spoke he whipped off a piece of water-proof cloth from a bunk and hung it up at a turning in the tunnel to keep the poisonous fumes from spreading. Having completed these preparations the men gradually settled down to wait for the fight.

An hour later, the smoke cleared. The enemy had arrived at the conclusion that the men must be either dead or insensible. Subsequently a man, looking like an officer, crawled up to the tunnel, holding a triangular flag in his hand. He was forcing a few soldiers to crawl ahead of him.

Meanwhile Kao Yun-ho who wore his gas mask found his dizziness lessening. Pressing himself against the wall at the entrance, he stood with his gun aimed toward the enemy. The first soldier stopped short near the entrance and squinted inside. It was obvious that he dreaded this mysterious cavern and that his nerve had failed him. Kao Yun-ho took aim. He pressed the trigger and the bullet zipped out from the barrel. Then in rapid succession he threw two hand-grenades and rushed out on the tail of the smoke sent up by the explosions.

Jui Chao-shou guarding the entrance on the left rushed out with two fighters on hearing the volley.

The enemy took flight along the mountain slopes on both sides of the communication trench. The ground outside the tunnel was stained with blood.

Kao Yun-ho pulled off his mask and stood on a mound to survey the surroundings. A breeze blew against his uniform and he felt himself bathed in coolness. Taking a deep breath, he spat on the dark blood and muttered,

"Come along. Our guns are ready for you."

* * *

The clouds hung thick and low at daybreak on the third day. Outside of the tunnel enemy shells exploded in rapid succession so that a smokescreen rose like a wall. Under its cover the enemy, vicious and crafty, continued their deadly schemes to destroy the tunnel. They tried every means, hoping against hope, to dislodge this thorn from their flesh.

The firing ceased. On sentinel duty, Sung Teh-ching took a few steps toward the entrance to look out. At first he heard a crunching of footsteps in the communication trench in front; then the sound died away. He alerted himself, raised his rifle and was just on the point of looking for a target when a sudden gust of hot air blew against him, and fierce flames leaped up around the entrance. In a second the mud walls and the rocks became diffused with red.

He was perspiring all over from the intense heat, his heart beating rapidly, almost bursting. He stood his ground. As a sentinel this was his duty. Despite his great discomfort, he bent down and peered towards the outside. He was about to stick his head out to see better when a tongue of flame shot up, singeing his eyebrows and hair. He fainted and fell into the flames.

Leaping over, Jui Chao-shou grabbed him and pulled him into the tunnel.

The fire rolled inside with the flow of gasoline, bursting into fierce flames instantly. The men began struggling and gasping in the intense heat. Moreover the communication wiring was burned to ashes.

"Out! Go outside!"

"We can't stay here to be cremated. Go out and make them pay for our lives first!" yelled the men, unable to hold themselves back any longer.

Rushing out from the turning, Kao Yun-ho ordered: "Halt! We must not go out to fall into a trap." Simultaneously Company Commander Li Han-yu barred the entrance.

"The enemy doubtless have set up machine-guns outside," he told them. "We must not go out. Instead we'll quickly put out these flames. We cannot let this fire spread into the interior."

Calm was restored and the men following the company commander's order began to fight the dancing flames. They stamped with their feet, beat with shovels; others smothered the flames with dampened coats.

Jui Chao-shou picked up a clump of earth with a spade and threw it on to the flames, which receded only to return again immediately.

Li Han-yu peeled off his coat. Hardly had he extinguished the flames on one side when they flared up on the other.

A wooden pillar had caught fire and the roof was in danger. Kao Yun-ho leaped over and with all his might pulled it down. The pillar, fanned by the breeze, lay writhing like a dying dragon.

The flames, resembling innumerable tongues of snakes, flickered towards the interior and scorched the clothes and skin of the men; but for the safety of their stronghold, they persisted stubbornly in their fight.

The tunnel had become a furnace. Kao Yun-ho was soaked through with sweat. He was choking and his head swam. His breathing became more and more difficult as he gasped. His bloodshot eyes, under their thick bushy brows, glared at

the flames as if confronting a ferocious enemy. "You are taking it for granted that your flame-throwers and napalm bombs will kill us off in here, are you?" he said to himself. "Well, you have exhausted all your vileness but you can do nothing whatsoever to us. Even fire can't daunt us." He raised an anti-tank hand-grenade and tossed it toward the enemy outside the entrance thinking to drive them off first and then attend to the fire. Because of the smoke and flames and his own weakened condition the hand-grenade fell short of its target and exploded at the entrance, directly in the path of the fire. Blasts of air from the explosion broke up the fire into scattered lots which immediately extinguished themselves.

Li Han-yu's heart leaped with exultation. He shouted to the others, "A new method! Double quick! Put out the fire with hand-grenades."

The first to act was Jui Chao-shou who promptly threw one and the patches of fire were exploded into mere sparks. In high spirits, the entire group fell to digging up dirt and sand, and speedily put out the scattered bits of fire.

The enemy outside had been frightened off by the explosions. Meanwhile order was restored in the tunnel. Li Han-yu advised everyone to make good use of the interval to check up and the men took to cleaning their rifles and bullets and repairing the emplacements. Everybody was busily occupied.

* * *

But a new ordeal cropped up.

Owing to the intense heat from the fire and their fatigue from the last few days, the men were parched with thirst. As this was the first time they had fought in a tunnel and thus lacked experience, the store of water, scanty to begin with, had been used up.

Waterless, the biscuits they tried to munch got stuck in their throats. Even their limbs refused to obey them. Some suffered from a burning sensation in the throat and became

irritable, while with some others their nostrils and lips dried and cracked till they were bleeding. A few of them stripped to the waist and lay face-downward on the damp earth to cool off their hot bodies. Some men greedily stuck out their purplish tongues to lick the droplets seeping from the moist walls, and all the time Company Commander Li Han-yu was racking his brains to find a remedy for the men's thirst. Everything was tried, even tablets of medicine and tooth-paste; but all to no avail.

Kao Yun-ho was in the same terrible plight as the rest. He leaned his bare arms against the wall. At times he went to the entrance to gulp in some cool air. To him, who had had pneumonia, the ordeal was even worse, and it was the first time in his life that he experienced such dreadful thirst. It was as if his nostrils, eyes, ears and mouth were burning up and that he was being suffocated in a big jar.

But he was a man of strong will-power as the whole company well knew. Once when they were being put through important tactical manoeuvres in readiness for action, an attack of pneumonia came on, complicated by a severe case of dysentery. He stubbornly refused to take the repeated advice of his superiors to rest, and when he could no longer shoulder a rifle he held a wooden stock in its place and hung on, for he was resolved to learn things, whatever the difficulties. He overcame his weakness by sheer will-power and went through the course of military training with flying colours. Now, again, he was experiencing the battle of will and physical suffering. His thoughts took to wandering: "How marvellous if only I could have one little sip of clear cool water!" He had grown up beside the Yinma River in Chiutai County, Kirin Province, where sparkling waters flow the year round; and during the War of Liberation he fought his way from the Northeast to South China, and then he came up to Korea when the campaign to resist U.S. aggression and aid Korea began; he had crossed any number of rivers, streams and brooks where the deep overflowing waters are ever singing and rip-

pling. Now even one drop of water was denied him by the American invaders. "I am a Communist Party member and a fighter of the Volunteers. I am not afraid of any suffering or difficulty, and for the purpose of exterminating the American invaders and for the sake of my motherland and my people, I shall do my best." So he had vowed in the presence of his superior officers. And now, at this very moment, with the knowledge that the enemy were there above their tunnel and with the sight before him of the fighters looking to him, he derived from his own avowal a renewed strength. He staggered to his feet with teeth clenched. He found his agony diminished.

He felt that as a Party member he should not only withstand more suffering than others but also should find ways to help them overcome difficulties. He rose to his feet, took up a pick and went round the crevices and low places to search for a damp spot, in the desperate hope of finding the life-giving water. Stroke by stroke he dug down two feet deep, but still no water. Then in bitter disappointment, he laid down the pick.

He tottered to the entrance and looked up. The sky, which had threatened to rain just a moment ago, was now clear of clouds. He retraced his steps. He looked up to see if the ceiling gave any indication of seepage from a spring. The top was smooth and even, without the least sign of water.... Suddenly it occurred to him that there might still be water in the drum where they first had stored it. He got to the rusty drum, and, taking off the lid, put his hand into it. Something felt moist and cool to the touch. Half believing, half doubting, he asked himself, "Can it be water?"

The drum contained only very little water and now, with the earth which had been shaken into it by explosions, the resulting mixture was a thin layer of muddy soup. Gently he tipped over the drum and with a porcelain bowl skimmed the top, bit by bit. A yellowish muddy fluid flowed into the bowl. Finally, after what seemed an age, he collected a bowl

of yellow liquid. One bowlful of water was, at this time and place, more precious than jade and gems. And as he gazed down upon it, the same sensation he had felt on diving into the Yinma River on a blazing-hot day, came over him. All the compelling temptation of the sparkling river was embodied in the bowl. Then the vision of the men in dire thirst floated before him, one by one. He firmly controlled himself. He believed he could withstand his thirst; in fact, he had the obligation to do so. And this priceless bowl of water? It should go to the wounded men, the company commander and his comrades-in-arms.

After the water had cleared by settling, Kao Yun-ho carefully carried it to Li Han-yu.

"Company Commander," he called, "here is a bowl of water. Take some."

Li Han-yu immediately pushed the bowl back protesting, "I am not thirsty, let the wounded men have it first."

In their present circumstances, it was not possible for one not to feel thirsty, but Kao Yun-ho well understood why the company commander had said "No." He took the water to the wounded Chang Jung.

"Squad Leader, you will be leading the men into action, so you yourself take a drink." Chang Jung stared hard at the bowl, then pushed it back without tasting it.

"Go ahead. I have already had some," replied Kao Yun-ho, gulping to relieve his throat from its extreme dryness.

Chang Jung, whose parched lips barely touched the water, took a small sip. At once a refreshing and luxurious sensation permeated his whole being and his eyes, shining with mute gratitude, seemed to say: "Squad Leader, I shall never forget you for this. And now I shall have the strength to fight on to victory."

Kao Yun-ho took the bowl of water to his comrades one by one and gave it to them sip by sip. Eventually the water was all gone and he had not touched a single drop himself. Although he had not had one drop of water, he felt, as he saw

his comrades' rising spirits, a much greater satisfaction than if he had had a brimming bowlful.

* * *

By this time, the American bandits had exhausted all their diabolical resourcefulness. But the fighters were still safe and sound. The fact that this hill had a cave which was indestructible and that it sheltered a type of men who could neither be bombed, gassed nor burned was a thing utterly beyond their comprehension.

Of course they would not take it lying down and so they went about to set up machine-guns and cannon indiscriminately all over the hill-top, inside the communication trench and on either side of the tunnel. They were now sealing the cavern by a tight blockade, in the hope that those inside would thus starve or suffocate to death.

After the enemy completed their blockade, an unexpected mishap occurred inside the tunnel — the radiophone suddenly lost contact with the command post in the rear.

The situation was extremely upsetting. Heretofore, whenever they were harassed by the enemy, our men had only to relay the information to the commanding headquarters through the radiophone and there would immediately be barrage after barrage of shelling to secure the safety of the tunnel. Heretofore, whenever confronted with difficulties in combat they had only to inform their superior officers through the radiophone and immediately orders would come that would enable them to win victory. Heretofore, when they heard heart-warming voices through the radiophone, they felt as though their superiors and many of their comrades-in-arms were right there on the spot with them and their spirits would rise. Now it looked as if all this would be cut off, stopped. It was impossible not to be apprehensive.

"It's too bad. We have lost contact with the rear," sighed one of the men heavily, somewhat disappointed.

With this remark, the atmosphere in the cave suddenly became tense.

Even more anxious than the others by all rights was Li Han-yu for he had been planning to launch an assault and was in desperate need of counsel from his superiors as well as artillery support. After reviewing the situation, however, he concluded that whether or not his plan could be carried out depended more upon the morale of the men themselves than on anything else. This kind of predicament he had encountered before — that is, the necessity of going ahead without the counsel of his superiors and the support of the artillery. On such occasions, so long as he led the men correctly and so long as the men had the will, victory would be theirs. He sat on an ammunition box deep in meditation, his chin cupped in his hands. It was his duty not to yield to such a disquieting mental state and its contagion. Therefore, he decided to call a meeting of the members of the Party and the Youth League with a view to adopting a plan for action to pull them out of their present dilemma.

At three in the afternoon the meeting of the members of the Party and the Youth League began and the rest of the men were also invited to attend. An atmosphere of gravity and seriousness prevailed as they sat face to face, crowded together in the narrow corridor. Party Secretary Li Han-yu stood up to the hand-clapping of all those present and began to speak.

Raising his fist up in the air, he said:

"Comrades, this is the moment for us to prove our worth. We have lost contact with our superiors; definitely we are in dire straits. However, as members of the Communist Party and the Youth League, as brave fighters of the Chinese People's Volunteers, we will not succumb to any difficulties confronting us. We must fight the U.S. imperialists till they are driven out of Korea...." He then called upon them to carry out the directives of the Regimental Party Committee by taking positive steps to harass the enemy, not letting them sleep

in peace, not giving them any rest, not permitting them advance or retreat. "Moreover, we must push the fight into the open space away from the tunnel." Then he exhorted the members of the Party and the Youth League to act as brave shock troops in combat. He asked all his men to make themselves invincible fighters, with a will of steel. Immediately following Li Han-yu's speech, Kao Yun-ho stood up. Raising his hand, he pledged:

"I hereby make my pledge. I am a member of the glorious Chinese Communist Party. At the time of joining the Party I vowed that I would fight for the communist cause heart and soul. Thus, the defence of Height 190.8 and the liquidation of the enemy facing us shall be the fulfilment of my pledge. Now, before you I swear never to bow to American imperialism!"

As Kao Yun-ho finished, Jui Chao-shou stood up. He too raised his hand:

"I hereby give my pledge. I am the son of our great motherland. I will never bow to American imperialism. Although we have lost contact with our superiors, I am resolved to overcome all difficulties and fight the enemy resolutely. I am resolved to follow the example of the Party members in all my conduct."

The comrades vied with one another to express their own determination and to make pledges. Members of the Youth League signified their desire to accomplish such heroic deeds as to qualify themselves for the noble title of Member of the Communist Party. Application for membership in the Youth League was voiced by the young fighters. Messenger Chang Pao-fu voiced his determination to prove himself worthy of his country. Radiophone operator Yang Kuo-hsing promised to put his communication system in good order. Chang Cheng-en stated that he was ready to follow the Party members to fight to the very end. All asked to participate in the fight, even the wounded comrades who had dragged themselves to sitting positions against the wall.

The flames from the lamp were dancing merrily and the place was brighter than on any previous occasion. The whole tunnel was in a high pitch of excitement. In every man's bosom was burning the ardent spirit of combat. They rallied themselves closely around the Party, and filled with dauntless determination they unanimously passed Li Han-yu's plan of attack.

* * *

A southeasterly wind was soughing over the dusk-covered mountain slope. Preceded by Kao Yun-ho, one dark shadow after another slipped out of the tunnel.

Kao Yun-ho, along with Chang Cheng-en and Tai Yung-chou, stealthily made their way toward the glen a little beyond. This was the place the enemy had been using as a hideout to conduct their attacks to destroy our stronghold for the last few days. Li Han-yu's decision was that this obstacle must first of all be eradicated.

The mountain, up and down, was brightly illuminated by flares and intermittent sounds of firing filled the air on all sides. The enemy, to all appearances, were as yet unaware of their impending disaster.

The air in the open was especially invigorating to those who felt stale from having been cooped up in the tunnel for so long; and a whiff of the cool breeze had the effect of a tonic to body and soul.

Kao Yun-ho signalled for every one to leap over the bomb-demolished communication trench and to quietly make for the vicinity of some emplacements. They uttered not a word and not the least sound was heard.

Along this particular strip of battlefield they moved, with the same surety of step as they would along their own village street; for here, in every trench and on every emplacement was splashed the blood and sweat of their comrades-in-arms as well as their own. Kao Yun-ho's mind was suddenly taken up with memories of Li Ching-shan again. But he restrained

his tears and the hatred in his heart merely served to make him hasten his steps.

They were moving along the difficult path which had been shelled many times, with the earth ploughed up one foot deep.

Kao Yun-ho was ahead of the rest. As he approached the glen he suddenly stopped and signalled to Chang Cheng-en and Tai Yung-chou to stoop. He held his breath and, flat on his stomach, observed that there was light flickering like that of a glowworm in front of a pine stump. Vaguely, a few dark shadows were moving about. He rubbed his eyes with his sleeve, then turned and whispered to Chang Cheng-en: "Be ready with your hand-grenades. Enemy soldiers ahead."

Chang Cheng-en was gifted with a pair of sharp eyes that could see far ahead even by night. He crawled along, dragging his wounded leg, and approached the dark moving shadows. Seven or eight American soldiers, sitting around in a pocket of the glen, were in the process of greedily stuffing food into their mouths. Not far from them another four or five were working on a shelter; while near them were two mortars set up ready for action. Chang Cheng-en's rage could hardly be suppressed and he muttered under his breath, "Sons of bitches, you think you can settle here for long?" The thought of Chang Jung's having been wounded a few days ago made him see red.

"Squad Leader, let me settle this bunch of robbers!" he whispered to Kao Yun-ho.

"Don't get impatient," Kao said under his breath, "we must have a plan before we act." To deal single-handed with so many adversaries was not a wise move, so Kao ordered Chang Cheng-en and Tai Yung-chou to approach the enemy from two sides, while he himself made toward them from the centre.

The enemy were still eating and digging, while they closed up on them in three directions.

At Kao Yun-ho's "Attack!" three hand-grenades flew simultaneously toward the enemy.

An ear-splitting crash took place and two American soldiers fell amidst the smoke and fire; the rest fled towards the top of the mountain. "After them," ordered Kao Yun-ho and the three fighters began the pursuit uphill.

Meanwhile, Deputy Squad Leader Jui Chao-shou's group, having disposed of the enemy's machine-gun nest blocking the left entrance of the tunnel, was also rushing towards the summit along the slope.

All at once, up and down the mountain, the air resounded with loud shouting and rifle shots. The enemy soldiers were in utter confusion.

Like ferocious tigers rushing out from the mountain, our men fought and charged. They met with no resistance.

Kao Yun-ho advanced, stepping over enemy corpses. There was, square in his path, an American soldier relaying a message into his walkie-talkie. The antenna glittered like snow and the voice was loud and harsh. One toss of a hand-grenade and what had been, a second before, the head of the American soldier was now a crimson splash.

The two groups charged up the summit at the same time. There, amidst red flashes, hails of bullets came showering down upon them.

"Charge, demolish the enemy's machine-gun nests." Jui Chao-shou, with Huang Pin-fa and Pan Cheng-chou swung to the enemy's rear by way of a shallow ditch. Following the explosions of hand-grenades and a shower of bullets the enemy machine-guns were silenced for good.

Kao Yun-ho considered it time for this little encounter to come to an end. He led all the men back to the tunnel with their spoils of war.

Outside the tunnel flares were flashing at short intervals, and rifle shots were intermittent. Inside, the men crowded around, laughing boisterously in celebration of the victory

of their assault just concluded. Each piece of booty was passed from hand to hand.

"Two automatic rifles."

"One walkie-talkie."

"One carbine."

"One mortar."

"Another mortar."

Now, Huang Pin-fa took two tins from his hip pocket and held them high in both hands, saying:

"Look, comrades, the enemy, in consideration of our plight in the tunnel, have taken the trouble to bring us tinned food from America."

Another burst of laughter rang out in the tunnel—the proud laughter of the victors.

Company Commander Li, exultant, warmly grasped Kao Yun-ho's hands to give him his personal congratulations.

"You all did splendidly. I shall recommend you for merits when we return to the rear."

"This is to our company commander's credit," Kao Yun-ho said seriously. "If you had not surveyed the ground in the daytime and had not chosen the proper lines of attack, we could not have succeeded so well."

"The credit goes to our Party," gravely stated Li Han-yu. "The Party branch made the correct decision, and we on our part faithfully carried out the directions of the Regimental Party Committee." He glanced at his watch. It was half past two. Raising his head he announced, "It's long past midnight. Time for bed. Have a good sleep so as to be ready for tomorrow's battle."

No one was able to sleep however. Victory was a powerful stimulant.

* * *

It was the fifth day of their withdrawal into the tunnel. At noon, when everybody was resting, radiophone operator Yang Kuo-hsing suddenly cried out happily in surprise:

"Company Commander, it's from the headquarters, from the headquarters. . . ."

From the day the communication with the headquarters was cut off, Yang Kuo-hsing had been tinkering with the radiophone day and night. He had repeatedly left the tunnel to repair the aerial even in the face of enemy fire. He ignored fatigue and danger, setting his heart on restoring contact with the headquarters. His face had become dark and thin with bloodshot eyes, though it had been full of colour back at the time when he first came to the front. Now that his efforts had been rewarded with success, all signs of fatigue on his countenance were drowned in smiles. He was speechless with joy.

Attracted by his heartening news, everyone pressed around him and crowded toward the radiophone. When the earphone began buzzing, the silence in the tunnel was so intense that each one could hear his own breathing.

"Comrades, how are you? I am sending you greetings on behalf of the Divisional Party Committee."

The voice, coming through the earphone, was as warm as it was firm. Company Commander Li's face flushed as he glanced at the fighters around; and in a voice trembling with suppressed excitement, he admonished: "Quiet please. It is Divisional Chief-of-Staff Hsueh."

A sudden flow of enthusiasm flooded the fighters' whole beings as their eyes riveted on their company commander.

Li Han-yu raised his voice to shout into the mouthpiece: "Chief-of-Staff, all's well."

From the earphone came again the voice of Chief-of-Staff Hsueh.

"The American imperialists have launched a general offensive against us in an attempt to use military pressure to obtain what they cannot get at the conference table at the Kaesong talks. Your heroism has dealt a serious blow to the enemy's underhand methods. You have established a precedent in tunnel warfare . . . the Divisional Party Committee

attaches exceptional value to your work in guarding the tunnel. You have been able to hold your position by an effective use of the tunnel; you have ensured your own survival and at the same time dealt the enemy a serious blow and shattered all their vicious designs. Your experience is a most valuable contribution to our future combats. We trust that you will continue to fight hard. We shall very soon join forces with you."

While Li Han-yu was relaying these words to those present, Yang Kuo-hsing took over the mouthpiece and continued to communicate with the other end in a voice somewhat hoarse, the veins in his neck throbbing perceptibly. Meanwhile the voice from the earphone gradually grew fainter, ending up in indistinguishable sounds — the battery had gone dead. He quickly disconnected the battery, heated it over the oil lamp for sometime, and carefully reset it. Then, stubbornly, but hopefully, he started calling again.

The earphone once more started buzzing; and he handed it to the company commander.

". . . Hello, hello, 190.8, 'Big feast'[1] tonight. Dinner[2] at 22:15 . . . dinner at 22:15. . . ."

This exhilarating information whirled around in Li's mind like a cyclone; and without troubling to answer his comrades' questions, he snatched up one of his shirts, tore it into so many strips and distributed them to his comrades:

"Go and make haste to fix these laces to your shoes. Another thing, clean your weapons."

The company commander had hardly finished talking when Kao Yun-ho, having caught the significance of the whole thing, shouted:

"Hurry, comrades, get ready to take captives."

The group dispersed, and inside the tunnel activity began to hum. The men cleaned their guns and bullets, while others sewed on their shoe laces. All were talking, singing and laughing. Some put on their new coats and new shoes, wiped the mud off their faces with towels; others took out their "Resist-U.S.-Aggression-and-Aid-Korea Badges" which they had recently received and put them on proudly.

Li Han-yu quickly organized his men and preparations were made to fight their way out to meet the main force at the assigned moment. Kao Yun-ho was guarding the entrance, watching for the signal of the all-out counter-offensive. He was waiting for the time to strike. All those inside, including the slightly and seriously wounded, sat arm to arm, shoulder to shoulder; they, too, were waiting for the signal.

Finally, the moment came; our all-out counter-attack began in earnest. The dark blue sky of the night was suddenly lashed as by a storm and roared with thunder — our beloved guns had begun speaking. Innumerable streaks of fire were hurtling southward, thousands of shells were bursting all at once. Height 190.8 immediately became a sea of fire with flashes of lightning shooting skywards to bathe the scattered remains of the American invaders blasted by shell-fire in one sheet of red.

"Comrades! Advance!"

Moving through gullies, stepping over enemy corpses, our counter-attack forces advanced, wave on wave, making for the mountain.

"Forward, men!"

In two irresistible tidal waves our men issued from the tunnel, led by Li Han-yu and Kao Yun-ho. Trampling over the scorched earth they moved on their way to victory.

"Forward! Forward! Forward!"

The men had at last joined hands with the comrades of the main force. With the uninterrupted bitter fight of five days and nights behind, with the innumerable dangers and perils over, the squad now emerged in triumph.

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[1] Referring to all-out counter-attack.

[2] Referring to shelling enemy positions.

EYES OF THE ARTILLERY

CHANG CHAO

Liu Chien-hua was born in South Peitan Village, Leting County, Hopei Province in 1927. He joined the Chinese People's Liberation Army in September 1948, became a member of the New Democratic Youth League in September 1950, and in the following month joined the Chinese People's Volunteers. He served successively as gunner, artillery observer, clerk, squad leader and platoon leader. In February 1951, he was accepted as a member of the Chinese Communist Party. For the great service he rendered in getting far behind the enemy's rear to direct our artillery fire to destroy enemy pillboxes in the battle for Old Baldy Mountain in the Yonchon area, the CPV Command gave him a first-class merit and the title of Hero of the Second Class. On October 21, 1953, the Standing Committee of the Supreme People's Assembly of the Korean Democratic People's Republic awarded him a National Flag Order, First Class.

— EDITOR

One evening in July 1952, there was a cessation of artillery bombardment on the central front in Korea, the rising smoke and dust disappearing in the sky. An unusual silence prevailed on the battlefield. However, preparations for the fourth attack on Old Baldy Mountain were going ahead feverishly.

From the aperture of an artillery observation post at our Sangpopang front projected the two arms of an artillery

binoculars. A man, with the visor of his cap turned backwards, was looking at "Old Baldy" with his eyes glued to the eye-pieces of the binoculars. Late as it was, he could still distinctly see the sighting lines superimposed sometimes on a pillbox, sometimes on a pile of yellow mud, sometimes on the stump of a tree cut down by a shell. . . . Concentrating all his attention on the whereabouts of the enemy, he actually looked like a doctor gazing through a microscope in search of disease germs.

This man was Liu Chien-hua, platoon leader of the 8th Artillery Company. He was of medium height with a round, broad face, a straight nose and a pair of spirited penetrating eyes. Many days of tense observation work had caused his eye-sockets to sink deeply so that his eyes appeared larger and more prominent than usual. Owing to fatigue, he looked somewhat pale and his erstwhile rounded cheeks now showed the faint outlines of his square jawbone. All this did not seem to tally with his being only twenty-three years of age. Young as he was, he was nevertheless a richly-experienced and skilled artillery reconnoitrer. Because of his skill in observation, he had always carried out his assignments satisfactorily in the previous battles. His superior officers, therefore, always gave him the most important tasks in reconnoitring.

Today, since the time in the morning when things were scarcely discernible, he has never left the artillery binoculars. He has kept a constant watch over the enemy lest the crafty foe should secretly set up a new firing position. He knows very well that if an artillery reconnoitrer should be the least bit careless, making an error of, say, half a millimetre, the course of a cannon shot would lose its accuracy.

Lifting up his head, he glances obliquely at the observation man who is drawing up a firing plan, brushes his eyelids with the back of his hand and puts his eyes again close to the eye-pieces to continue his observation.

Looking through the binoculars, he has, as it were, a military map of three dimensions spread before his eyes; he feels as though he could touch "Old Baldy" 800 metres away merely by reaching out his hand.

"Old Baldy" is the dominating point of the hilly area around Sangpopang and Hapopang. It is a protruding defence position of the enemy on the west bank of the Imjin River. A reinforced company of the 23rd Regiment of the U.S. 2nd Infantry Division is in occupation of the mountain, from which the enemy can not only keep watch over our hilly area both sides of the Ikgokchon River, making use of "Old Baldy" as a spring-board to attack us, but also use it as a big padlock to seal up the passage leading right to Seoul. It is evident that "Old Baldy" in the hands of the Americans is something like a sword pointed at our chest; we must get hold of it and with it pierce the enemy's throat as it were, by way of a counter-attack.

Within half a year we have engaged the enemy three times in severe battles for control over this place. Every time after inflicting heavy casualties on the enemy, we have withdrawn of our own accord to our old positions. As soon as the enemy troops have settled down on the mountain, we beat them to a pulp with volleys of shells. It cannot be counted how many times the mountain-top has been ploughed up by our cannon fire. That is why the foe in mortal fear has called this nameless height "Old Baldy."

Now in the slanting rays of the evening sun, the mountain-top appears balder still, devoid as it is of a single blade of grass. The pillboxes reinforced by sand bags are nakedly exposed to our artillery.

"Platoon Leader, let's dispose of these dilapidated pillboxes," says an observation man by his side, laughing outright. "We'll ensure 90 per cent accuracy in our marksmanship."

Without a word in reply, Liu Chien-hua quietly keeps on adjusting the binoculars. Even though he has acquainted himself thoroughly with the enemy situation through careful

observation, he is not yet satisfied; he turns the sighting lines of the binoculars on those clearly discernible pillboxes and time and again compares and checks the entries in the record-book. Only after he has once more ascertained the absolute accuracy of his observations and can repeat them without a hitch, does he close the book.

The telephone bell by his side rings. He takes up the receiver and recognizes at once the regimental commander's voice. He cannot help getting tense as if he had the premonition of a battle beginning immediately. He reports excitedly to the regimental commander the result of his observation today.

Finally the commander orders him to go at once to the regimental headquarters.

Not knowing what it is all about, Liu Chien-hua turns his work over to the deputy platoon leader and goes hurriedly to the headquarters.

* * *

Liu Chien-hua has come by order to the regimental headquarters. In front of the military map, his eyes follow the regimental commander's red and blue pencil to the rear slope of "Old Baldy," marked by the groups of closely studded pillboxes of the enemy.

The regimental commander looks at him with characteristic gentleness and seriousness and says: "We are 100 per cent sure that we can destroy those pillboxes clearly exposed to view on the side of 'Old Baldy' facing us. But the enemy have become more clever after receiving repeated lashings from us, they have secretly built pillboxes on the back side of the mountain which we cannot see, while also on the front they have put up some clearly visible defence works just to puzzle us. . . ."

In surprise, Liu Chien-hua feels his scalp tighten.

Lifting up his head, the regimental commander sarcastically remarks: "The enemy think that in this way they can evade our gunfire, and then when our infantry gets to the mountain-

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Lifting up his head, the regimental commander sarcastically remarks: "The enemy think that in this way they can evade our gunfire, and then when our infantry gets to the mountain-

top, they can open fire on us from those pillboxes. But this is only wishful thinking."

Standing up, he moves a step nearer to Liu Chien-hua and, in a tone full of resolution and confidence, says, "Now we have decided to send someone deep into the enemy's rear to reconnoitre and then under cover direct our cannon fire. I order you to go with a radio man and a radio set across the enemy's closely guarded first line of defence into the rear of 'Old Baldy.' Find out the exact positions of the pillboxes and then you can direct our artillery fire to destroy them."

Liu Chien-hua's blood is running fast and his face seems to be on fire. His superior's trust and confidence in him have greatly moved him. But the assignment has come so suddenly that he has no idea as to how he should proceed. Excitedly and hesitatingly he looks at the regimental commander.

The commander seems to have guessed what is in Liu Chien-hua's mind and continues:

"How do you feel? This is the first time our artillery will make use of observations from behind the enemy's lines. We have had no such experience and shall meet with unimagined difficulties. But to a Communist no difficulty is insurmountable!"

Confronted with this arduous and perilous mission, Liu Chien-hua does not hesitate nor draw back; on the contrary, he is circumspectly considering how to overcome the obstacles and hazards which may arise. He wishes to say something to show his determination. But before he opens his mouth, the regimental commander goes on with his remarks:

"We trust you. We have full confidence in your loyalty to the cause of the people. We also firmly believe that you will be able to accomplish the mission in a brave and wise way. As to how to carry it out, we shall make a study of it by referring to the relief map on the sand tray."

Liu Chien-hua has realized deeply the importance of this mission. For two days, standing in front of the sand tray with a map in hand, he has thought intently on how to carry

it out. Now he turns his attention from the front line of our defence positions first to the complicated mountainous terrain near "Old Baldy," then to Height 346.6 deep in the enemy's rear, trying to find a secret path to steal his way through into the enemy's heart.

"Platoon Leader, have you decided on the route we are to take?"

In comes radio operator Li Pao-chiang out of breath. With smiles all over his face, he gently takes a radio set off his back, and then as usual opens the lid and turns on the switch. From his action, one can tell that he is a technically expert radio operator.

"Have you brought rain-proof cloth with you?" Liu asked.

"I've brought not only one, but two pieces."

"Well, you rest a bit. Then let's figure out quickly how we can make our voices as low as possible at the time of liaison. Look at this!" Liu traces with his finger in the sand tray the route winding up and down hills and creeks until it reaches Height 346.6, and then says, "This is the route we are to take and that's the place where we are to lie under cover; what do you think of it?"

A little later, Li Pao-chiang says in hearty approval, "Good! All's well! The route is unknown; the position for concealment is right opposite the back of 'Old Baldy' and well-hidden."

Li, who belongs to the platoon commanded by Liu Chien-hua, is a youth, always happy and fond of jesting. He is robust in physique and dark in complexion, revealing at all times the simple and honest spirit of a peasant. Liu and he have worked together for more than two years. They are a pair of old comrades-in-arms, firm in their revolutionary friendship. Liu is impressed especially by the youth's courage, alertness and sense of responsibility. That is why he has asked the regimental commander to let him choose Li as his assistant to go with him to the enemy's rear.

"Comrade Li, do you worry about the mission we are to carry out?" asks Liu, in a concerned tone.

With an expression of unusual seriousness, Li says, "I've already thought it over. As a revolutionary and an artillery man, I'm willing to sacrifice myself if only I can annihilate the enemy and reduce to a minimum the casualties of our infantry." After a moment's silence, he says frankly and animatedly, "Let difficult and dangerous tasks test me. If I should be killed in carrying them out, I hope the Party would accept me, posthumously, as a member of the glorious Communist Party."

In answering Liu's question, Li showed due respect to his superior. But his tone revealed his strong determination, his voice being somewhat hoarse because of his excitement. This makes Liu feel that the way he has questioned this loyal soldier is not quite suitable. After more than two years of trials and hardship at the front, he can have full confidence that Li will be brave and calm in facing dangers. So changing his tone to one of encouragement, he says, "Yes, we can certainly accomplish our mission successfully. Our will is like a 'ball of fire' while any danger is a mere 'drop of water.'"

"When we get into the tiger's lair, maybe we can get hold of a few tiger cubs to bring back! Ha, ha! Don't you worry, Platoon Leader," says Li, laughing heartily.

Liu shows his satisfaction with a nod and ends the conversation. Folding up the military map, he together with Li begins once more to study carefully how to control the static in the radio so as to avoid the enemy's detection, when they communicate from their place of concealment with the artillery command post.

* * *

It was the dark night of July 14. The gun barrels hidden in the artillery positions are seen to rise gradually, aiming at the area pre-arranged by Liu Chien-hua and his companion. The artillery men are busy cleaning the shells and putting

the fuses in place. The commanding officers continually telephone the observation post at the front, "Is there any new development?" "Search carefully!" . . . All this activity is for the purpose of being in readiness to open fire at any time.

The reconnoitrers of the advance observation post at Sangpoparg keep their eyes steadily fixed at the front line of the enemy's defence positions and at the rear flank of "Old Baldy." They are prepared to do one thing: in case Liu and Li are discovered by the enemy, they will let artillery fire pound the enemy so as to cover the two men's retreat.

Shafts from the searchlights sent out by the enemy from a distance move criss-cross in the dark sky; the flares glaring high in the air light up the front; red tracers fly over the sky like meteors; the enemy's cannonade shakes the valley, roaring with extraordinary volume; shells rumble and bullets whiz through the air: the enemy are doing everything to create an atmosphere of terror in front of their positions with a view to filling up any possible gap in their line of defence.

"Probably they have crossed the front line of the enemy's defence positions," says a reconnoitrer who is looking through an observation vent into the distance.

"Judging by the time, they may still be within our own line of defence," says another reconnoitrer, looking at his luminous watch.

"Just now I have seen a flash of light in the direction of Kangkundong. Could there be any trouble?"

On the firing-line, flames are still flaring up here and there. The rat-a-tat-tat of machine-guns, the roaring of cannon and the droning of night planes make earth-shaking thundering noises.

At this time, on the northern bank of the Ikgokchon River, the shadows of several men can be seen moving along unsteadily, sometimes leaping forward suddenly and sometimes disappearing into the black weeds. Escorted by a small group

of infantry scouts, who know the way, Liu and Li are groping ahead.

"Bang, bang, bang!" come the shots towards the single-log bridge across a stream, causing it to shake violently. This being the only bridge leading to the enemy-occupied areas, it is plainly impossible to wait for the cessation of shooting to ensure a safe crossing. So during a brief intermission of the machine-gun fire, they rush over the bridge quickly, and disappear again in the darkness on the opposite bank.

A little ahead is the place where small groups of our troops and those of the enemy have both been active. With one infantry scout in the lead, and Li bringing up the rear, Liu moves along in the centre, flanked by two other scouts; they are proceeding very carefully with uneven steps over the ground full of shell holes.

Now they have become exceptionally sensitive and are sending out, as it were, numerous minute feelers toward the boundless black night. They strain their ears and eyes, trying their best to discover the secrets of the dark night while doing everything they can to avoid the enemy. They all remember the instruction that unless the adversary gets so near as to be under their very noses, they are not supposed to start any fighting.

Crouching and crawling they push forward, and by the dim light of the night, watch for any signs of buried mines. They have not advanced many steps when a volley of shells explodes near by. The shafts of machine-gun fire shift irregularly before their eyes and the tracers run about aimlessly over the desolate plain. With a hissing sound, a series of shots go skimming over Liu's scalp. Liu hurriedly buries his head and on turning to take a look, sees Li lying low with his right hand holding on to the radio set at his back. They sometimes crawl to the left, sometimes quickly turn to the right, sometimes lie flat on the ground, and sometimes leap stooping forward; they go their zigzag way doing their best to keep out of reach of the enemy's gunfire.

After climbing over a piece of hilly ground, they see before them an open space.

"There are often small groups of enemy soldiers in ambush here; we must be particularly watchful."

Liu and Li, hearing these words from the leader of the infantry scouts, give a nod in reply and follow his lead on tiptoe. After groping along for quite a distance, they come up to the bank of a stream.

Twice they hear explosions not far away to their left. To an experienced man like Liu, this means that a fusillade of shells is about to follow. With a gesture, he urges his companions to go across quickly. Sure enough, they have not gone many steps when a thunderous roar resounds over the place as if the whole earth were breaking up. The pressure of air from the explosions almost throws them down to the ground. Clutching at the branches of small trees, they rapidly slide down the bank to the edge of the stream.

To avoid the danger of exploding shrapnels, they have to cross very quickly. Li with the radio set on his head follows Liu to ford the stream. But the way the white flares come up hissing and hanging in the air is really annoying; they make the surface of the water shine as bright as day. Consequently, they have to bend low in the middle of the stream where the water is waist-deep. It is only after the flares have gradually fallen and then suddenly burned out that they again stand up, feel their way with their toes, and wade through the water gently lest they should make any noise at all.

Climbing up the bank, they find a tract of deserted rice fields and ruined houses. In the dimness, they can still distinguish the blackish shelter trenches and the stubs of trees severed in the middle. This is Kangkundong. They are coming much nearer their adversaries now.

With a view to facilitate locating the enemy soldiers and avoiding their notice, the five men now change their formation, crawling forward in two groups. In the front the in-

fantry scouts keep on advancing in the form of a triangle while Liu and Li proceed in a straight line from behind, thus pointing like an arrow from the bow toward the enemy's heart.

After crawling over this broad section of land, they again climb up a high slope. Looking out from this place, they can see "Old Baldy" to the right of them, the enemy-held Sokh-yondong North Mountain to the left. The dim shadow of a mountain in the front is Height 346.6, their destination for concealment. By the beams of the searchlights, they can see indistinctly the moving shadows of men on the top of "Old Baldy," from where comes the metallic sound of picks striking against stones. Evidently, their opponents are in a hurry to go on stealthily with the repair of their barricades. Liu says to himself, "You may as well work overtime to make repairs, tomorrow we will have all the more to destroy."

Liu knows that by this time they have come deep into hostile area, for the bullets discharged from the heights are flying high above his head. The enemy have often boasted how well-guarded their front is: "It will be just as impossible for the communist soldiers to cross into our lines as for a camel to go through the eye of a needle." However, right now our "camel caravan" has actually "gone through the needle's eye."

When they get to the edge of a hillock, they stop there. Opposite is a whitish road, on which a big damaged tank is dimly seen lying half-inclined on its side.

The leader of the infantry scouts crawls over to Liu and whispers close to his ear, "This is the enemy's main line of communication. There is often a platoon of soldiers on patrol in the neighbourhood of the tank. We had better leave you two now; with the five of us going along together, we are liable to expose ourselves to view. Wish you success! Remember, you have to be extremely careful."

They shake hands firmly with one another and disappear in the darkness.

Looking in the direction of the three disappearing comrades, Liu is imbued with a feeling of gratitude. He vows secretly in his heart, "I must accomplish my mission so that I may render you my thanks by the performance of a victorious deed."

The two men, Liu and Li, continue to move along crawling. When they reach the edge of a grove of shrubbery, they take a little rest. The scattered leaves on the ground are wet from heavy fog, and the dew-drops fall from the trees like rain with every puff of wind. They breathe in deeply the moist and fragrant air. Looking up, Liu sees that the "handle" of the Great Dipper has come under the Pole Star. The luminous hand of his watch points to one o'clock. It is already late in the night. After ascertaining his bearings by means of a compass, Liu, wet with dew, goes in the direction of the highway.

He is burning with anxiety, wishing that he could get to his destination all at once. But under the present circumstances he cannot but put a check on his impatience and proceed with the utmost vigilance. Sometimes he is like an eagle surveying the surroundings, sometimes like a wild bird disappearing in a flash among the bushes and sometimes like a kitten crawling on all fours on the ground.

While going forward, Li gets his hand-grenade caught on a wire. By the time he succeeds in freeing it, Liu's shadow has disappeared in the distance. He whistles softly a few times, but no signal comes in reply. He is listening, keeping his ear close to the ground; it is quiet all around. He knows at once that he has made a great mistake. If he cannot find the platoon leader, it will be impossible to accomplish anything, not to mention the important mission. Annoyed and ashamed, he is in a bad fix, with sweat dripping down his damp back. A little while later he hears a series of "chirp! chirp!" the call of a night bird. He hurries a couple of steps forward, claps his hands lightly twice and catches up with Liu at last.

The more they advance, the more they are conscious of penetrating deep into the mountains where the air is thin;

their breath gets shorter and shorter and their hearts throb violently. Now they have wedged deeply into the enemy's positions. The enemy soldiers on patrol may come along and chance to discover them, or on striking a match for their cigarettes, may also spot them. In this ghostly place something dangerous may happen at any moment.

Groping their way they get near to the tank at last, ford another small stream, then cross the highway and climb up Height 346.6. By now, "Old Baldy" has been left behind on their flank.

There are caves and grottoes everywhere. They may step unawares into an enemy's doorway and come face to face with their foe. Relying on what they remember of the relief map on the sand tray, they look for that slanting precipice opposite "Old Baldy." But easy as it was to spot the place for their concealment on a map, now on the dark and indistinct mountain side they are meeting with unimaginable difficulties in finding the location.

They climb up step by step and lie down after every brief ascent to make sure of their direction. In this way, they reach a very high place and stop in the midst of a shrubbery thicket on a cliff. About 100 metres above, there is an enemy pillbox, from which a heavy machine-gun is sputtering fire against a distant object.

Liu Chien-hua carefully scrutinizes the terrain. There is a dense forest. An umbrella-like tree with broad leaves towers high into the sky, surrounded by evergreen oaks, resinous redwoods, larches and wild grass. Looking north, he is facing the rear of "Old Baldy." Liu makes a sign to Li and goes head foremost into the woods. His face comes unexpectedly in contact with spider webs. Obviously, this is a place seldom frequented by people.

Sitting close to Li on a thick layer of soft fallen leaves, Liu feels exceedingly happy. They have finally reached their destination successfully after fully seven and a half hours on the way.

Seen through the thick leaves of the trees, the stars are twinkling in the night sky. Liu looks at his watch, it is exactly three o'clock. In a low voice, he says to Li, "Before daybreak, we have to get ready to contact the regimental headquarters so that we may the sooner report to the regimental commander on the conditions following our arrival. Let's get started with our work."

Saying not a word, and taking advantage of the noise of the enemy machine-guns, Li, with the aerial in hand, climbs like a nimble monkey up the umbrella-like tree, puts up the aerial and camouflages it. Then with their pocket knives and fingers, the two of them dig a hole in the ground like the one they had practised on three days ago.

At the same time Liu is thinking of his superior officers and comrades on the other side of the line. "They must be wondering whether we have arrived safely, and must be silently wishing us success!" Liu keeps on thinking and unconsciously speeds up his work, the newly dug-up earth falling gently on the leaves.

Measuring the pit with his fist, Liu finds it to be more than 40 centimetres deep. He makes a gesture to Li, who takes the radio set from the rain-proof bag and puts it into the hole. Then Li turns on the switch and the amplifier begins to give forth a humming sound. Following this, "chuck! chuck!" the noise of interference is heard, as well as the annoying babble of the Americans. Li knows that his radio is so close to an enemy broadcasting station, and that he has to set the wave length with caution.

Opening his knapsack, Liu takes out a military map and a plotting board, and at the same time he uncaps a grenade and puts it by his side.

It is dark and chilly in the grove; Liu and Li shiver in their dripping clothes. Vicious mosquitoes come attacking them until their faces and hands are covered with pimples.

When they have finished their preparations, they hear all of a sudden the sound of footsteps in leather shoes. Looking

through the screen of wild rattan, they can see on the highway over 30 metres away seven or eight American soldiers coming along mumbling something among themselves. From the pillboxes on the mountain-top whistles are blown; the enemy soldiers have got up and are assembling.

* * *

It is four o'clock, with the day just breaking. Liu Chien-hua spreads out a military map with a 1 to 25,000 scale and looks straightforward. Oho! There is "Old Baldy." Its rear slope appears naked before his eyes. Within a distance of at most 500 metres from where he is hiding, all the enemy's pillboxes are clearly exposed to view, which are constructed in an area of 300 square metres by taking advantage of the precipitous cliffs and dead angles. He counts the number of these pillboxes carefully and finds them to be 22, spread out regularly like the petals of plum-blossoms. There is a big one on the top of a mountain which has ditches on three sides; it is especially conspicuous, with many telephone lines extending from the inside and an aerial pole at the top. This must be the centre of the enemy's command, Liu concludes. There are men coming and going on "Old Baldy" and even their olive-shaped caps can be distinctly seen without the aid of binoculars.

It is with some difficulty that Liu keeps his excessively tense and excited emotions under control. He feels elated as he looks at these targets.. "Yes, we'll make the big pillbox the trial target, dispose of it first and then attend to the small ones." Having come to this decision, he takes a pencil and a triangle, and draws a plan of bombardment on a piece of paper placed against a hard board. Then he writes a note and hands it to Li for transmission to the regimental headquarters to report the situation and to ask for further instructions.

The headquarters agrees to his plan. Before the trial bombardment starts, Liu compares the map again and again

with the real scene before him. Using the plotting board, he determines the actual position of a pillbox on the blueprint and marks the spot with a red pencil. Subsequently he writes a note and hands it to Li, "Pillbox number ×× latitudinal co-ordinate ×× longitudinal co-ordinate ××." Li pokes his head into the bag and calls, "Big tree . . . small tree . . . cans . . . pancakes, one, send over!"

Just as Li lifts his head up again, a shell comes flying over "Old Baldy" and explodes behind the big pillbox. Liu has held his breath to wait for the coming of this shell. Now that it has actually arrived, he feels truly relieved and pleased.

According to Liu's keen judgment, it is an "over-reaching shot," 100 metres beyond the mark. After some mental calculation, he indicates to Li, "Reduce the distance by two units." Subsequently, the second shot falls on the ridge of "Old Baldy," but 50 metres short of the mark. By the increase of merely one unit, a hit can be effected. In firing at a long range of 8,000 metres, the deviation of a shot can be very great. To be able to place a bracket within 100 metres after only two trial shots is, according to artillery requirements, considered to be quite ideal. This is possible only in the case of a man highly skilled in making observations coupled with the accuracy of the gunner.

Liu, however, starts thinking intently. Though the result of the trial bombardment is good, the rate for hits is sure to be low in view of the long range, and of the fact that the big pillbox has ditches on three sides. If this target is not destroyed at once, the shelling may serve to frighten away the enemy in all the pillboxes just as "the noise made by beating the grass may scare away a snake." Moreover, his superior has placed a limit to the number of shells to be fired; so the frugal use of shells must be taken into account. After due consideration, he makes up his mind to alter his plan. He decides to attack those small pillboxes first, and to adjust the accuracy of his aim with each shot. Then after

all the small ones are destroyed, he can make it a surer thing to demolish the big one at a final blow.

Strong volleys of rapid gunfire now begin, after positions have been ascertained by some trial shots.

". . . Cans . . . pancakes . . . three, quick, quick, send off!"

Having sent the secret code message in accordance with the platoon leader's direction, Li crawls out in a hurry, and parting the foliage of the thicket watches expectantly for the result of the shelling. In a second, a number of shells come zooming along and explode in the midst of a plum-blossom cluster of small pillboxes. Yellow mud, rocks, stones, blocks of wood and gunny sacks, jumbled together in the thick smoke, are sent flying high into the sky. When the smoke and dust have disappeared, Li can see two pillboxes torn up by the roots and the iron beams lying crooked and scattered on the ground.

Liu continues handing over notes and giving signals for the transmission of instructions for shelling. Volleys and volleys of fierce gunfire sweep over the groups of enemy pillboxes. The long-legged American soldiers run about helter-skelter like so many rats fleeing from ruined rat-holes; their helplessness makes Liu laugh while Li is in such high spirits that he cannot refrain from crawling near enough to Liu and whispering, "We won't let them off even if they should hide themselves under the sea!" Liu waves his hand, and in a lowered voice says, "Better not be so pleased yet. We have destroyed only six pillboxes. Quick! Tell them to turn to those on the left side!"

At this time comes the lumbering sound of motors heralding the arrival of two snail-like armoured cars at "Old Baldy." Shrieking American soldiers crawl out from many different directions carrying their companions, whose bodies and limbs have been badly mutilated by the shells, and begin loading them into the armoured cars.

Liu writes a note and gives it hastily to Li, who is deeply absorbed in the scene before him; he says at the same time,

"Send it!" Then lifting up his head, he has his eyes fixed on the targets, waiting for the flames and thundering roars. He waits, waits and patiently waits until, all of a sudden, Li draws his head out of the bag and says miserably, "The machine is out of order!"; then he slips right back into the bag again.

Liu is watching the armoured vehicles get away as they turn around trailing two columns of smoke behind. Like a bow tightly drawn which has suddenly snapped, he gives out a deep sigh and helplessly glances over at Li.

Unable to withstand the continuous electric current, the tungsten filament of the vacuum tube in the radio set has burned out. Though the two pieces of the broken filament may by chance become connected through electric attraction and again produce a humming sound, they will be separated at the slightest shock. However much Li may hope from the bottom of his heart for the broken ends to be reconnected, that is to no purpose. He despondently pulls out his head, with his damp coat-sleeve wipes beads of sweat as big as peas from his brow and, the corners of his mouth twitching, says to the platoon leader, "Gone dead!"

The radio set is the nerve-centre linking together the regimental headquarters and countless fighters! Without it, everything is paralysed; without it, one really feels alone, out of touch with the whole. And without it, Liu finds it impossible to fulfil the mission entrusted to him by the Party, his superiors and comrades. A feeling of heavy responsibility weights on him, he finds it difficult to breathe and he is sweating all over.

"Can I let things be like this?"

Now before Liu there lies, as it were, an insurmountable wall. He fully understands what he is up against; in the face of realities, it is useless for him to hope for any lucky break or to indulge in any illusion; separated from his superiors, he has to overcome all difficulties independently, purposefully and with a resolute will.

"Our mission hasn't been carried out; it's useless simply to become agitated!" Liu looks at his comrade and, full of confidence, says, "We have been given two days to do the job. We have spent only one. We shall go back this evening and come here again with a good radio set. What do you think?"

Like one getting a grip on a big rock in the angry waves of the sea, Li is alive with new hope. Without the slightest hesitation, he says, "Then at what time shall we get back to this place?"

"Tonight!"

"We had better start soon! Otherwise we can't return by tonight."

The sun has just turned westward. Time hangs heavy on their hands. The enemy planes often pass overhead, diving headlong to bomb and machine-gun our positions. Li angrily swears at them, "Blast it! Let's see how long you can keep running wild like this!"

* * *

It is midnight; there is a light drizzling rain.

In the shelter of an infantry platoon at our front line, someone is telephoning: ". . . No, Comrade Number One, we have not carried out our mission. It is fitting that it should be carried out by us."

Liu Chien-hua and Li Pao-chiang have crossed the enemy lines and come back to the positions held by this platoon. Here they meet by chance another small group of scouts who are going to the enemy's rear to replace them. In this encounter, both parties insist on going on the mission, each unwilling to give way to the other. Consequently, Liu has telephoned the regimental commander for instructions. In view of the fact that Liu and Li are familiar with the route and the conditions there, the regimental commander complies with their request to go back again to the enemy's rear. So they all look at each other in silence.

Now Li is absorbed in the new radio set brought over by the scouts, embracing it, fondly opening the lid, turning the switch around and around, and examining minutely with a flashlight every mechanical part of the set. Feeling satisfied, he is laughing merrily, "Darling precious! It all depends upon you now!"

Liu has no mind to answer the comrades' curious and trivial questions. He urges Li to get ready to set out.

They fill their flasks with hot water, take the required quantity of dry provisions and disappear in the darkness of the wilderness.

After midnight, it begins to rain more and more heavily. Everywhere on the scorched earth torn by shells, there are now muddy pools. Perhaps the enemy soldiers are hiding themselves on account of the rain and they have stopped sending off flares. It is so dark that one cannot see a person standing before one's own face.

They grope forward, picking their way through the sticky and dirty mud. Following Liu closely, Li holds the radio set on his back with his hand like a mother carefully protecting her baby, doing his best to shield it from being damaged in any way. It keeps on raining; an oblique wind blows the rain-drops against their eyes much to their discomfort. The radio set is wrapped snugly in water-proof cloth, while Liu and Li, marching on quickly against the beating rain, feel more and more chilly. Sometimes they fall unawares into shell-craters, sometimes bump against pointed rocks and while going through bushes they have their faces, hands and feet scratched by thorns, leaving long stripes of blood-stains.

It is near daybreak when they get back again to the grove on Height 346.6 facing "Old Baldy."

The heavy rain has stopped, and the grove is dripping all over. They are still breathing hard, but they start to get ready.

Li places the radio set carefully into the hole. Somehow he feels tense again, his heart beating fast. He turns on the

switch and a humming sound comes through. He adjusts the wave length and the cycle. When he hears the sound of "Wua, wua!" he trembles with excitement. He immediately sends out the contact signal by snapping his finger lightly on the mouthpiece, "Dih-dih — dih!"

"Understand, understand! Get going, get going!" The reply comes so distinctly that even Liu can hear it clearly. The sound makes him smile happily from the bottom of his heart, dispelling the gravity and gloom from his face. He gestures to Li: "Get ready to fire!"

Liu knows that though the rate of making hits was high enough yesterday, the lowering of the temperature after the rain will affect the accuracy of the shelling. So he has to proceed with "experimental shelling" to detect the degree of variation and to rectify it.

Early in the morning when enemy soldiers on "Old Baldy" emerge from the entrances of the pillboxes, the first shell comes to greet them. It explodes in the group of small pillboxes and an American soldier with hair parted in the middle who has been standing outside goes rolling down into the valley.

"The first hit made should not be considered a sure hit," this is a cautious conclusion drawn by artillery observers and the reason is that the hit may be only an accidental one. So Liu is not satisfied with the first shot, and after making slight corrections, has another shell fired, which hits the mark still better. Liu now has full control of the situation, and sends out directions for the gunners at our firing-line to take action. With yesterday's experience he becomes more confident.

Roaring thunderously the volleys of shells come like waves of the sea, shaking the mountains, causing the earth to quake and enveloping everything. Smoke and dust rise into the heavens to form a grey curtain of clouds covering the sun and the sky, as though portending a storm. Amidst the roar and rumble of the cannon fire, Liu puts aside the code symbols hitherto used and shouts: ". . . Continue the shelling!"

A plum-blossom group of pillboxes having been wiped out, the shells now land on another cluster. Listening to the platoon leader's incessant shouting, Li gets scared, feeling that he is too bold. He gestures to Liu, who shakes his head with a smile.

"No fear. The noise of our exploding shells is loud enough; the enemy can't hear me."

Though Li does not know much of the technique of directing artillery fire he respects Liu all the more when he sees the enemy pillboxes caught in the clutches of the powerful artillery and destroyed one after another. He wants very much to pass a few words of praise to the platoon leader, but does not know what to say. Before he can find the appropriate words, the platoon leader signals to him and he at once relays the message through the transmitter. Immediately, volley after volley, the shells explode among the enemy positions.

Through his binoculars, Liu reviews in detail the results of the bombardment. The shells have ploughed up the back slope of "Old Baldy," where the 21 small pillboxes have been rendered entirely useless, some their tops riddled with holes and others their foundations uprooted.

As Liu is about to turn his attention to the last remaining big pillbox, a familiar rumbling comes through the air. Listening attentively, he knows more and more definitely that it is the sound of tank motors. He nudges Li with his elbow and the latter readily understands.

Two heavy tanks drive along the highway below them and hurriedly climb in the direction of "Old Baldy."

Like a hunter encountering a wolf, Liu is particularly eager for action. The signals for opening fire on the tanks were made ready yesterday. All of a sudden he takes the earphone from Li, puts it around his own head, thrusts his head into the bag and shouts, ". . . Big tree, X . . . small tree, Y . . . lunar calendar. . . . Quick, quick!"

The tanks are running along. Following Liu's cry of "Let go!", a volley of shells explodes around the first tank. The caterpillar-belts roll off the cog-wheels, the gas-tank emits thick smoke and fire, and the tank is at once paralysed. The second tank, seeing the fate of its mate, turns round in a hurry and runs away at top speed. Liu congratulates himself, thinking, "If they hadn't come of their own accord, we wouldn't have made good yesterday's loss."

The command post orders a shell every minute, just to create disturbances so as not to give the enemy one moment's peace or time for repairs to their defence works. Liu and Li are instructed at the same time to take a rest. They use this opportunity to eat a few biscuits and drink some water from their flasks, scarcely noticing that ten minutes or more have soon elapsed.

Li is looking towards "Old Baldy" and sees five or six American soldiers, hair unkempt, running about and looking around, and then enter the big pillbox. At its entrance several more soldiers with shovels are stealthily piling up earth.

"Off with the cap, ready!" these are the words on a slip of paper Liu now hands to Li.

Li has scarcely finished transmitting this interesting series of code symbols when columns of black smoke curl up from the exploding shrapnels around the big pillbox. Under the hammering blows of another barrage of shells, the roof of the big pillbox is completely torn off and only three or four men are seen fleeing from the smoke and fire.

Liu and Li are stirred by a common feeling of pride as they both spontaneously turn their thumbs up in token of their admiration for the crack gunners. Liu looks at his watch, finds it to be half past two, and writes a note for Li to report to the command post on the results of the shelling.

"Twenty-two pillboxes and one tank destroyed, over fifty enemy soldiers killed."

"Fine, fine, dinner in the evening, dinner in the evening."

When Liu recognizes the regimental commander's voice, he feels as though he had crossed the line and returned to their own positions. Having drawn a map showing the results of the shelling, he feels incomparably relaxed. But fatigue, drowsiness and hunger attack him all at once. He, somewhat haphazardly, eats a mouthful or two of biscuits, and seeing that it is still early, lies down on the damp fallen leaves to take a rest.

With the cessation of the bombardment, Liu and Li lie on their backs by the side of the broad-leaved tree to enjoy in peace the fruits of victory. In the grove, the pleasant chirping of little mountain birds, the soft singing of yellow-birds and the shrill note of cicadas come from all directions, very much like the playing of a big symphony orchestra. While Li is listening, his eyelids gradually close. But awakening soon with a start, he quickly sits up and then makes an effort to be on the watch for the enemy.

It is now getting dark. Liu and Li take down the aerial from the tree, stick the uncapped hand-grenades into their belts, fill up the hole in the ground, remove all footprints, and with the radio set on Li's back begin their long return trek.

The moon in the western sky, sometimes covered by dark clouds, sometimes revealing her joyful smiling face, casts a calm clear light on the dense forest. The stars are ever twinkling; it seems as if they are unable to penetrate the secrets of the black wilderness. The chilly wind brings with it the light fragrance of wild chrysanthemums.

On July 17 at 7:15 in the evening, the general attack on "Old Baldy" begins.

To prevent the enemy from making use of the pillboxes on the face of "Old Baldy" to offer stubborn resistance, the artillery, in accordance with the observations made by Liu, carries on a ten-minute rapid-fire shelling. Then a contingent of infantry which has already pressed on near the foot of "Old Baldy," starts storming the mountain-top. It takes merely ten minutes for the troops to reach the top. At the cost of only

six killed and wounded, we have wiped out an entire reinforced company of the 23rd Regiment of the U.S. 2nd Infantry Division and occupied their positions.

On the slope outside the regimental command post, the deputy commander of the infantry division, holding Liu's hand tightly, says:

"Thank you for the part the two of you played. You created conditions favourable for the infantry's attack! This is the victory of your ideal that 'the artillery should be at the service of the infantry.' "

Then the regimental commander says, "To make observations in the enemy's rear is a new thing; you have set a brilliant example! I have made a report to commend you and Li Pao-chiang for merits!"

To render thanks to the artillery men for their effective assistance, the contingent of infantry principally responsible for the attack and occupation of "Old Baldy" has selected the best rifle from among the trophies of war taken on "Old Baldy" and sent a delegation to present it to the 8th Company to which Liu and Li belong. These words are inscribed on the rifle, "The Victory Rifle of Infantry and Artillery Co-ordination."

At the solemn ceremony on the presentation of the rifle Liu Chien-hua accepts the honour on behalf of the 8th Company. The honour of victory stirs him; though the comrades are loud in praise of his accomplishment, he says at the meeting:

"All glory to our big brother, the infantry! Victory has been won through our combined efforts!"

STORMING "OLD BALDY"

CHIEN CHU

Ho Chung-yun, native of Hochia Village, Chiahsiang County, Shantung Province, was born in 1924. He joined the Chinese People's Liberation Army in September 1945, became a member of the Chinese Communist Party in March 1946 and attended the National Conference of Combat Heroes in September 1950. In April 1951, he joined the Chinese People's Volunteers, successively serving as platoon leader, company commander and battalion commander. In April 1953, he was given a first-class merit by the CPV Command for his meritorious exploits in the battle for Dongsan Mountain at Sangpopang to the northwest of Yonchon. In October of the same year, the Standing Committee of the Supreme People's Assembly of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea awarded him an Order of Freedom and Independence, Second Class, and a National Flag Order, Second Class. In 1953, he attended the National Conference of Combat Heroes of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

— EDITOR

The enlarged meeting of the Regimental Party Committee had continued for almost a whole day at the regimental headquarters. The announcement of adjournment was finally made. The cadres of each battalion, the regimental command,

and the political department streamed out of the shelter. Only Ho Chung-yun, commander of the 1st Battalion, and Political Instructor Hou Shu-lin were still bending over the brightly lighted military map listening to the regimental commander, who repeated some of the important tactical problems that had just been mentioned at the meeting. Their eyes followed intently the regimental commander's fingers which moved rapidly over the map. A little farther off, Regimental Political Commissar Chang Yao-hsien was gathering papers together, his body leaning towards the three of them and his eyes fixed on the map. From time to time he nodded smiling. Finally Regimental Commander Liang Ching-shan, in the most serious and determined tone, said to Ho Chung-yun, "In brief, this is a battle to storm modern fortifications, pitting our modern best against the enemy's. The CPV Command attaches great importance to this battle. The divisional commanders have repeatedly emphasized that we must get some experience from this battle and set an example for storming fortifications the modern way. The responsibilities are heavy! Hence the Regimental Party Committee has decided that the 1st Battalion is to be mainly responsible for the attack. You are our old hero, and the 1st Battalion is the cream of the regiment. The Regimental Party Committee believes in all of you! Go back and get everything ready for the battle, which must be well fought. It can't afford to be otherwise."

Political Commissar Chang put the last document into his brief case and again reminded Ho: "It's the first time that our regiment has ever been faced with the task of storming modern fortifications. If we fight well we shall gain confidence and experience. So our fixed principle is: If we aren't well prepared we won't fight. Go back. Have a good talk with your men, and be well prepared."

"Rest assured, Commissar. We are determined to do well in this battle." Ho and Hou replied together, their faces showing determination, seriousness of purpose and high

spirits. They both saluted the commissar, turned and stepped out of the headquarters.

On leaving the dazzling light of the acetylene lamp, the tunnel seemed darker than usual. They stood still a while, rubbed their eyes and felt their way out.

A blood-red sun was setting behind the range of mountains in the west; its faint streaks of golden light seemed to gild the mountains in the distance and the trees in the foreground lately shaved bare by shell splinters. Clusters of coloured clouds floated lazily towards the west. In the communication trench leading to the front lines, a detail of soldiers of the army service corps was worming its way forward like a long dark snake, shouldering boxes of ammunition. The communication trench had already been blasted by the enemy artillery into several segments, and the army service corps men could be seen flitting past the huge gaps one after another. At this moment the enemy bombardment had temporarily stopped. Only from behind our lines came intermittently the thunder of our big guns.

The Old Baldy Mountain could be faintly seen from this distance, stretching from the northwest towards the southeast in a semi-circle like a sickle. It was not only a dominating point of the enemy's defence line on the western front along the eastern bank of the Imjin River, but also a "thorn," a great threat to our defence positions. The artillery up there could bombard our defences at Sangpopang and Hapopang by day, while by night it could seal up the ferry over the Ikgokchon River. If it was occupied by our troops, we could guarantee the safety of the ferry and our defence line at Sangpopang and Hapopang; in addition we could destroy the barriers which screened the forward positions of the enemy and directly threaten their chief positions.

In order to take "Old Baldy," the men of the 1st Battalion had unceasingly manoeuvred in small groups in front of "Old Baldy" over the past three months and wiped out over 300 enemy soldiers, earning the repeated praise of the regimental

and divisional commands. But "Old Baldy" in the hands of the enemy continued to be "a thorn in the flesh." Every time the battalion commander visited his companies, he was surrounded by crowds of his men begging for an early attack on "Old Baldy." And every time Ho Chung-yun's heart would throb with emotion as he thought of his responsibilities as battalion commander and especially as an old hero who had been received by Chairman Mao. In the War of Liberation, he had many times been commended for his heroic deeds. He had been a delegate to the First National Conference of Combat Heroes. After he entered Korea, he had been awarded a National Flag Order, Third Class, by the Korean Government for leading his men in taking Height 190.8 and annihilating a reinforced company of the Thai 21st Regiment which had taken part in the war of aggression. He felt that the honours bestowed upon him by his motherland and Korea entailed still greater responsibilities. He understood even more deeply than the fighters the necessity to take "Old Baldy." He had often stood in front of the map on the table with absorbed concentration, considering all kinds of battle plans. He had also gone to the front line countless times, to observe the topography of "Old Baldy" from all angles. There was nothing that held his attention these days except the storming of "Old Baldy."

Now that the task had at last been assigned to him, he felt both the excitement and the weight of responsibility.

"Instructor Hou," said Ho, turning round to the political instructor as he strode forward, "we must admit that we are really a bit near-sighted! In the past we could only see our own battalion to the neglect of the swiftly developing situation in Korea. For example, we didn't pay enough attention to our artillery, which is becoming more and more powerful."

"That's right! We never expected so much artillery support," Instructor Hou agreed with a nod. "Didn't the regimental commander say, 'Although we haven't got as much iron and steel as the enemy, yet if we concentrate on one spot

we could overpower them!'? To us, chiefly responsible for the assault, this is a new situation."

"That's right! That's right!" Ho said positively. "Just because we didn't take this point into full account, we paid attention only to our battalion whenever we made preparations and considered tactical problems."

"It's the same with our political work. We haven't done enough to help everyone get adapted to this new situation and make preparations accordingly."

Having gone round a slope the two of them climbed to the top of a hill in front. Here they were attracted in spite of themselves by "Old Baldy," which suddenly came in sight amidst the distant mountain ranges. They stood motionless on one side of the communication trench like two wooden posts and for a long time gazed at the bald mountain bathed in the light of the setting sun. Although both Ho and Hou were quite familiar with this mountain, they felt as if they were looking at it for the first time in their lives.

A shell burst on a mountain slope 100 metres away. Ho Chung-yun, awakened from his deep thoughts, said to the instructor in a confident and positive tone, "We must make further preparations and solve the problem of co-ordination between artillery and infantry, and turn our battalion into a real knife in this battle!" He changed his tone and then asked, "But how can we concentrate the thoughts and energies of our men on the problem of preparation?"

"According to my understanding, a few of our men have begun to look down on the enemy blindly, thinking that we have already made enough preparations and can take 'Old Baldy' without much effort." The instructor continued, stressing every word, "When everyone learns that there is so much artillery support, it is quite possible that such feelings will grow. As repeatedly told us by our political commissar, a blind scorn for the enemy constitutes our ideological foe. We must guard against such thoughts and feelings and overcome them."

The battalion commander nodded, saying, "Yes, the directive is quite correct. We must try hard to do away with these feelings. Only then can we be sure of victory."

The curtain of night settled over the land and "Old Baldy" was swallowed up in darkness. From the enemy lines, now buried in blackness, occasional clusters of red balls of fire shot up, while on the mountains far and near exploding shells flashed white and bright.

"Let's go! It's already dark," urged the instructor.

"Let's go back and make an overall survey of the problem."

They lowered the ear flaps of their padded caps, shook loose their leather boots which had frozen fast to the ground without their noticing when it happened, and went down the hill along the communication trench, crunching the frozen earth under their feet.

* * *

The political instructor of the 3rd Company, Tao Jui-liang, a strapping man in his prime, with broad shoulders and a big face, paced back and forth several times in the narrow space between the bed and the table, his hands behind his back and his head bent. Presently he sat down at a small table made from empty boxes. He poured himself a glass of water from a kettle, formerly an empty egg powder tin, raised the glass to his mouth but slowly put it down again. He placed both elbows on the table, his hands holding his broad face and his eyes staring at the tiny flame of the oil lamp in the alcove.

"Such powerful artillery support. This is the first time we've had such support. We have changed, we have become strong. It's only natural for the men to be excited. But after all, victory isn't going to be offered to us on a silver platter. Why is it that some men want to fight early and yet are slack in their work of preparation? Yes, this is just what the battalion commander and the battalion instructor have pointed out in their directive—because our artillery has been strengthened, the men have come to feel that it is easy to beat the enemy. They have come to think that victory depends solely on artillery. . . ."

He looked at the lamp while he carefully analysed the state of mind of the troops. Since the enlarged meeting of the Regimental Party Committee, Battalion Instructor Hou had personally made a rallying speech at the 3rd Company's meeting of the members of the Communist Party and Youth League as well as at the general meeting of the rank-and-file. The men had begun to understand the importance of making further preparations and had actually started on them, yet there were still some whose thinking had not come clear. They said that if it had to do with the topography, well, they knew it well, so well they could rush forward with their eyes shut. If it had to do with the artillery, well, it had been strengthened. When the big guns spoke, "Old Baldy" would be turned into "a sea of fire and a mountain of smoke." They thought that no further preparations were necessary and the problem could be solved by starting to fight. So they wanted to start fighting as early as possible.

"R . . . r . . . rrr . . . ring." The telephone bell cut short his contemplations. He reached for the receiver: "Is that the battalion instructor? Yes, this is Tao Jui-liang speaking. What! Is the divisional command sending someone to bring us the red flag? Have they decided to give it to our company?" His face suddenly lighted up with excitement and repeating the battalion instructor's words, he said, "Right! For the time being, we won't announce which squad will get it. We'll require everyone to make preparations to co-ordinate artillery and infantry according to the new situation and the new plan of battle. We want everyone to achieve positive results through active preparation to be deserving of the flag. . . . Yes! Of course the enemy are still strong. . . . Right, we must encourage the development of a democratic spirit in military affairs and start a movement to get everyone to think of new plans and methods to be used in battle." Tao

Jui-liang was so excited that he could hardly refrain from asking in return, "The red flag . . . when will it be sent over? You must notify us! What? The battalion commander wants to speak to the company commander? That's wonderful! . . ."

The red flag to be given to the 3rd Company! This was certainly a great event. Tao Jui-liang put down the receiver and quickly paced back and forth, imbued with intense joy and enthusiasm.

At this moment Company Commander Li Chih-tang burst into the cave, unfastened his leather holster strap and threw it on the bed, exclaiming, "The men are certainly in high spirits. . . . They're simply grabbing. . . ."

"Grabbing what?"

"Hand-grenades! You've never seen the men go after you like this before." The company commander was clearly recalling the lively scene that had just occurred when they were distributing the hand-grenades. "This one wants to be in the vanguard group and that one wants to join the shock troops. If you don't agree, they just won't let you go. If you agree, they want guarantees. This one would ask what kind of artillery support we would have and that one would ask about the calibre of the guns. Oh! Once they start asking, there's no end. They kept it up till I was just tired out!"

Suddenly the voice of the signalman Kao Chia-shan resounded outside the cave, "Company Commander, please give some hand-grenades to me. I want some too!"

"See! They're going after me again." The company commander shot a happy look at Instructor Tao.

The company commander stroked Kao's head affectionately and teased him, "What do you want grenades for? You can't blow on them like a bugle!"

"But I can use them to attack pillboxes and catch prisoners!" replied Kao blinking his eyes. "I want to fight my way up 'Old Baldy' with the troops!"

"No, you aren't even as tall as a rifle. You can't go!"

"No, Company Commander. This is a very important battle. I want to go too." He got so anxious that he jumped to his feet.

"Then you try and ask the instructor. I won't approve your request," the company commander threw Tao a hint.

"Instructor, let me go!" Kao Chia-shan turned and began to entreat him.

The instructor laughed and then half closing his eyes sized up this lovable soldier.

"You are not allowed to go!"

"Why?" Kao looked as if he had been most grievously wronged, his eyes moist.

The company commander again stroked his head and said slowly and deliberately, "It's no joke — fighting a battle. Kao Chia-shan, you are still young. You had better stay behind and look after the home!"

"Look after the home! Always look after the home! No, I want to go." He became obstinate. "If you would only allow me to go, I guarantee I'll finish any task that is assigned to me!"

"You'll guarantee?"

"Yes! I'll guarantee! I am already seventeen years old now, and I know how to handle rifles, tommy guns, hand-grenades, dynamite sticks, light machine-guns. I can do all kinds of things. I can blow the bugle, and send messages. Besides, I am a Youth League member!" He said these last few words in an especially ringing voice.

The company commander believed his words. On ordinary days he had often seen Kao Chia-shan helping everyone in the squad cleaning weapons, and these last few days he had been asking his comrades in the blasting squad to teach him how to use anti-tank hand-grenades and how to demolish pillboxes. He had gone through various kinds of military training with the infantry, and in addition had also learned the job of communication and liaison during battle. The boy was good at everything, only he was a bit too young. But if

he took Kao along and kept him at his side, then it wouldn't matter. Besides, the few messengers in the company were all transferred to other posts one after another. So why not take him along?

"All right! Your request approved!" The company commander's eyes shone with both tenderness and gravity. "During battle, you follow me as my messenger, but you are not allowed to run around wherever you please. And then you mustn't cry like a baby when in difficulty. . . ."

This was something unexpected and Kao Chia-shan, secretly rejoicing, replied immediately, "I'll remember what you have said." He at once saluted the company commander and the instructor, turned around and went out of the cave jumping with glee.

After Kao Chia-shan left, the instructor gave the company commander a long hard look and emphasized, "This fine spirit is indeed something precious. Still we must direct and guide the men so that they will all develop in the right direction and take an active part in the preparatory work. You can't win a battle by high spirits alone. Say, Company Commander, the battalion headquarters has decided to give us the red flag."

The company commander immediately asked, "What? The red flag given to our company?"

"Yes!"

"Well! Old pal! That's wonderful!" The company commander jumped up in joy. "When will they send it over?"

"Well, the battalion headquarters will notify us. But. . . ." He was interrupted by the telephone bell.

The instructor hung up the receiver and said to the company commander, "The battalion commander is coming right away, and wants you to wait for him at the company headquarters. Let me go to receive the red flag!" He strode out of the cave, "Messenger, ask all who have been cited for meritorious service to gather together!"

To the beating of gongs and drums and the singing of the "Red Flag," a song which they had composed themselves and just learned, the instructor and all the heroes of merit of his company went a *li* out to receive the cultural and art troupe which the divisional command had sent to deliver the red flag. This red flag, the divisional command ordered, must be planted on top of "Old Baldy."

A movement, full of ardour and enthusiasm, soon got under way in the tunnel to put one's signature on the red flag. The men put on clean uniforms, strapped on all their arms while some even pinned on their chests the meritorious service medals and commemoration medals which they had carefully kept in safe places.

A rich, strikingly brilliant red flag was spread out on a table, surrounded by everybody. The gold characters "Plant the Victorious Red Flag on Top of 'Old Baldy'" shone in the flickering candle light, brightening up the whole tunnel.

The men pressed closely around the flag, struggling to sign their names. Those standing behind had anxiety written all over their faces. Some were standing on their toes with their hands on the shoulders of those in front. Others were shouting, "Clear out when you have finished signing. Don't stand in the way." Big fellows used all their strength to push aside the crowd and pressed forward, while the short ones tried to squeeze through between them. The men in front cried out, "Stop pressing. What's the idea of crowding? The red flag is big enough. Do you think you won't be able to get your names on it?"

Everyone hoped to sign first. Everyone hoped that his name would fly over "Old Baldy." Everyone well understood that the red flag symbolized the victory of our revolutionary cause, the victory in resisting U.S. aggression and aiding Korea and the victory of this impending battle, in which modern methods would be used to storm fortifications. The inscription on it was the battle cry representing the hopes and desires of the people of our motherland and the people of Korea.

Instructor Tao Jui-liang was standing on one side of the red flag which threw a crimson light on his face. He looked attentively, one after another, at the faces that appeared before him, faces so enthusiastic and so serious. He listened to the men expressing their determination with such noble generosity and intense emotion.

When the last person had signed his name another wave of noisy clamour arose. The men all wanted fighting assignments, crowding around the instructor from all sides.

"Give the task of planting the red flag on 'Old Baldy' to our squad!"

"No, give it to our squad!"

In the flickering light of the candle, the instructor swept the men with his searching eyes and said, "Everyone wants to plant the red flag on top of 'Old Baldy,' but how can we really do this job?"

A commotion arose among the men, the murmur of voices discussing this question grew louder and louder.

"The moment our bombardment ceases, we'll fight our way up. Won't this be enough to get them?"

"Humph! Even without artillery we can take them prisoners just the same. Those Yankee scarecrows! All that's necessary is to fire away with tommy guns coupled with a few hand-grenades."

"Your blind indifference and negligence for the enemy won't get you anywhere in the battle! This red flag won't be given to any squad just now." The instructor slowly rolled up the flag, his face extremely stern. "As the battalion commander and instructor have repeatedly told us, this is a battle in which we are pitting our modern best against the enemy's modern best! We are supposed to prepare well, to think of new and better ways of fighting, to practise more and to learn to do what we do not yet know how to do. Only when everyone has prepared well, will the red flag be presented to the squad that has prepared best." Finally, he added with special emphasis, "If we are not well prepared, it's possible we shan't

get to fight this battle at all! The men in the 2nd and 3rd Battalions are all contending for this red flag!"

"Humph! The job is already given to us, we definitely won't let others take it away from us!"

"Then guarantee you'll do a good job of preparing for the battle."

Another wave of spirited excitement arose in the tunnel.

* * *

Company Commander Li Chih-tang stood at the entrance of the tunnel, looked around for a while and then went back to the cave. He lay on a bed for a moment and then got up, pacing rapidly back and forth, his face full of anxiety.

"Why isn't the battalion commander here?" Company Commander Li had a fiery temperament, which at this moment was flaring up again. "It's possible he's investigating our preparatory work once more. Investigations today, investigations tomorrow! You only hear the thunder, the rain never comes . . . it's really exasperating!"

"Ah! Battalion Commander, you are here!" He met the battalion commander at the entrance of the cave just as he was going out to have a look. And not waiting for the battalion commander to sit down, he asked, "When shall we fight?"

"We'll come to that when we're prepared," replied Battalion Commander Ho in a casual way, as he took in at a glance the company commander's impatience. He pulled over a nearby bench and sat on one end.

"Weren't we prepared long ago?" asked Company Commander Li, ignoring altogether what the battalion commander had said.

"Prepared long ago?" Ho asked in a tone of disbelief.

"Battalion Commander, please just give the order! There's no question. I, Li Chih-tang, guarantee!"

"Ha, ha! Li Chih-tang guarantees! Can you guarantee victory all by yourself?" Ho pressed.

"Of course, I can't guarantee victory all alone, but our 3rd Company. . . . You surely know the way the 3rd Company fights. You have only to cry out, 'Charge!' and the men will all rush up like tigers. . . ."

"Will just plain assault and hard fighting do? This isn't a battle against the Kuomintang soldiers. And even when we fought the Kuomintang troops, we emphasized the importance of tactics."

"We've fought the American invaders for two years now. If we haven't mastered the couple of tricks in their bag by now, we've been in the army for nothing all this time. That bunch of 'gentlemen soldiers' will shake in their boots when they hear a gun go off. The harder we fight the more they are afraid. During the enemy's 'autumn offensive' in 1951, when we counter-attacked Height 190.8, we occupied the enemy positions in little more than ten minutes and in no time wiped out a whole company of enemy soldiers. But what kind of weapons did we have then, and what kind of weapons do we have now? Automatic rifles, recoilless guns, bazookas and many other guns of various calibres. Besides, we know the topography of 'Old Baldy' so well. . . . Well, even without all these advantages, with just a handful of parched flour and a rifle, we can still beat their modern best as we did when we first came to Korea!"

Seeing his temper mounting, Ho wanted to squelch him with some really biting remarks, but when the words came surging up to his lips, he controlled himself and swallowed them with great effort. He rose and walked towards the entrance: "Come, follow me."

They came to the relief map in sand. Ho bent down to take up a stick and pointing to the map said, "There is not a bit of cover in this open space here. The enemy artillery has long since aimed accurately at this part. Once we start charging, shells will immediately come smashing over. How can you lead the troops through the enemy barrage?" He took a look at the hesitant expression in Li Chih-tang's eyes, and then continued, "On 'Old Baldy' the enemy have set up seven lines of barbed wire entanglements and over 200 pillboxes. Even the most powerful artillery can hardly destroy all of them completely. According to the directive from above the way we should fight this battle is as follows: We should break through at many points, shorten our columns, and attack on a wide front with each unit dashing for its own objective. This means that the troops must be divided into many small units, all scattered or dispersed. Under these conditions how will you organize and handle the troops and direct their attack, and lead them to destroy quickly the remaining barbed wire entanglements and pillboxes? Besides, the tunnels and pillboxes on the slope on the other side of the mountain can't be hit by our artillery, yet they are covered by the enemy's long-range fire; how will you solve this problem? After you occupy the enemy positions, how will you closely co-ordinate with the artillery and beat back the counter-attack? As far as we understand it, something like this is the situation that we are facing and just this state of affairs already presents so many complex problems. What other problems are there we haven't discovered yet? Do you mean to say that spirit and dash alone can enable us to take 'Old Baldy'? How can you be sure you can make good your guarantee to take 'Old Baldy'?"

In the short silence that followed, the cave was so quiet that even one's own heart beat could be heard. After a moment of embarrassment, Li muttered, "Whatever the means, we must take 'Old Baldy' anyhow!"

"Of course! We can take 'Old Baldy' under present conditions. Otherwise our superiors won't let us fight this battle! But conditions are still conditions. If we don't make any subjective effort, conditions won't be of much use. Therefore we must have confidence but certainly not belittle the enemy blindly. We must strengthen our preparatory work. The better we prepare the surer we shall be of victory. Well," said Ho to the company commander again affectionately, "let's go to the various squads to take a look."

When they came out of the tunnel, Ho patted Li Chih-tang's cotton-padded coat, saying, "It's getting dirty! Does it fit you?" It was the coat Ho took off and gave to him a month before when the latter's dugout collapsed from a direct hit and his clothes and bedding were all burned.

"Battalion Commander, you must have frozen," Li felt a bit embarrassed.

"It didn't matter. The clothes I wore weren't thin!" Suddenly it seemed as if some new idea had struck him and in a most intimate tone, he said, "Li Chih-tang, we have been together for a long time. I know you very well. You are honest, active, brave, in fact, you are all right except that you tend to rely solely on bravery. You don't use your head enough. It's because of this that I am worried. In fighting a battle on such a scale as this, we also need brains besides bravery and technique. You are a commander, so you must consider problems more carefully. You must set an example. So many eyes are on you, you know. . . . Understand?"

"Battalion Commander, I, Li Chih-tang, will be worthy of your concern!"

They walked on slowly along the communication trench.

* * *

The battalion headquarters was established half-way up the back slope of a tall mountain in a low, dark and damp tunnel not longer than 20 metres. In a corner near the entrance a charcoal stove made of mud was burning, emitting red sparks every now and then. On the stove, water was bubbling and boiling in a biscuit tin, filling the tunnel with steam like a thick fog. Near the entrance sat a messenger cleaning weapons by the light coming in from the outside.

Battalion Instructor Hou had not been in the whole day. He was busy mobilizing the men of each company and talking with the Party members and the officers. Since the decision was made to assault "Old Baldy" Deputy Battalion Instructor Liu Tien-chen had gone to the supply section of the battalion

to take charge of the work there. Pan Yu-lu, the battalion chief-of-staff, had also been going to every company to check up on the arms and equipment. Only the battalion commander was in. He had just returned from the 3rd Company.

With his clothes all splashed with mud, the battalion commander was practically wet from head to foot. He should have taken his clothes off and dried them by the fire; but he did not give the slightest thought to his own comfort. He now walked about in the tunnel and now leaned against its damp walls, raising his head and staring fixedly for a long time at the ceiling. He was completely sunk in deep thought.

In order to have a thoroughly clear picture of the enemy's situation, to know the exact locations of their firing positions, and to further the work of preparation, Battalion Commander Ho and other officers of the battalion, after repeated analysis and study, made a plan to investigate the fire-power and actual installations of the enemy. This was more effective than any explanation based on a map or a sand relief of the topography. Through actual reconnaissance, he could further teach the troops the necessity of overcoming their feelings of belittling the enemy. He had sent to the regimental headquarters and asked the command to permit him to take the officers personally to "Old Baldy." And he now was waiting for their reply. He was a careful man. He had never proposed any scheme of action rashly. Whatever plan he put forward was always the result of repeated discussions and long study. But even so he would examine it again and again to see if there were any omissions no matter how small. After propounding his plan, he would ask himself if there were any new changes in our situation vis-a-vis the enemy, and if so, was it necessary to add some new material? Now, before he got the reply from his superiors, he was considering who should take charge in case he was refused permission to go personally, and what instructions to give to the officer who would go in his place. And if approval was given for him to go, then how he should organize the personnel to carry out his proposals

still more effectively. He examined the plan from beginning to end, in order to see if it agreed with the actual situation. He told the messenger to wait at the telephone while he himself slowly walked towards the entrance of the tunnel; where he stopped before the relief map just inside and pondered for a while. Then he climbed to the mountain-top and entered the observation post.

"Anything new?" he asked the lookout and at the same time walked up to the artillery binoculars.

"Battalion Commander, the enemy were firing smoke shells a while ago. When the smoke cleared we discovered some newly dug earth on the top of the mountain."

"Oh, I see! They are adding some new fortifications." Ho started to think intently again, "Could it be possible that the enemy have discovered our intentions? No! Several times they have made emergency repairs to their fortifications under cover of a smokescreen. But again this is a new situation, so we must pay close attention to it." He continued to make careful observations of the enemy lines.

"Battalion Commander, telephone call!" the messenger called from the entrance of the tunnel.

"Telephone call?" Ho repeated, surprised and happy. He hurriedly turned to the lookout saying, "Observe attentively and record your observations minutely. Be sure to put down the exact location of the new earth, make a detailed map and give it to me." Saying this he fairly flew down the hill.

He entered the tunnel, strode up to the table, and took up the telephone receiver.

His face shone with happiness. "Approved? Yes, I'll get things organized immediately. I'll be careful. Rest assured, Commander!" He hung up the receiver and called: "Staff Officer Lu! Go and tell the company commanders to gather at the battalion headquarters with all the officers above squad level at four p.m." After a pause he added, "Yes! Tell everyone to be properly camouflaged without fail. And have one squad

fully armed and prepared for battle." They chose the 6th Squad of the 2nd Company, which had been cited for collective meritorious service of the second class. After they had arrived at the fighting front they did much night patrol duty and had had the most experience.

Suddenly the sky darkened and it began to snow heavily. Light fluffy flakes swirled in the air and fell to the ground, covering the black shell holes. The mountain ranges seemed to have been wrapped up in a pure white rug, as if there had never been any war.

Battalion Commander Ho watched the snow-flakes that floated and danced in the air and coupled with his tense excitement there rose a feeling of gladness. The snow came at just the right time.

At four in the afternoon, it stopped snowing, and already gathered at the battalion headquarters were the officers and soldiers camouflaged in white. The battalion commander carefully examined their camouflage, explained their task and set forth with the group. An hour later they arrived at their most forward positions at Sangpopang, 300 metres in front of them was "Old Baldy" — the place they would climb to that night and take by assault a few days later.

They rested in a tunnel, waiting for it to get dark.

In these strenuous days of preparation, the officers and the soldiers always felt they did not have enough time, the days simply flew by. But now time seemed to pass much too slowly. At short intervals someone would go to the entrance of the tunnel to take a look.

Time dragged on interminably, but at last the dark night arrived. In the distance flashed exploding shells, while all over the enemy lines flew red tracer bullets. From the tall mountains behind the enemy's positions, bright rays of powerful white light shot out like long swords and fell directly on our positions. Fearing night attacks from our troops, the enemy had turned on the searchlights.

Battalion Commander Ho leading an observer from the artillery, a telephone operator and other officers appeared on the snow-covered slope.

"Absolute silence must be preserved! Spread out! Forward!" The men passed the word along softly and crawled down the hill. Having crossed an open field and forded a small river, they arrived at the foot of "Old Baldy." Here was an old cave which had once served as an air raid shelter. The battalion commander safely installed the officers in the cave, called the deputy leader of the 6th Squad, Hsiao Han-chen before him and told his squad to cover them. In addition he pointed out the precise position from which they were to do the job of covering the officers and blow up the auxiliary defence works of the enemy when our artillery opened fire. Laying emphasis on what he said, he finally ordered, "The task is very important! As long as the enemy have not discovered you, you mustn't move even if bullets hit you or fire burns your eyes. If the enemy discover you and dash down; or if you bump into the enemy, you must resist with determination until you have accomplished your task of covering the officers! Come! Repeat once!"

Hsiao Han-chen repeated the order word for word without a single error.

"All right, you may go!"

Ho followed Hsiao and his squad with his eyes until they had all safely crept into the spot for hiding and then he crawled towards a place half-way up "Old Baldy" with the company commanders.

It was a steep slope. They stuck their hands into the snow, grasped clumps of grass and made their way up with effort. They climbed on to a little knoll and by the light of the snow and the reflections from the enemy searchlights which were directed at our positions, a barbed wire entanglement could be vaguely seen no farther than 50 metres in front of them.

"Battalion Commander, we mustn't advance any farther!" said Chang Chin-sheng, commander of the 2nd Company,

lowering his voice as he climbed to the battalion commander's left and restrained him with one hand.

"It doesn't matter. That place is very steep and cannot be reached by the enemy artillery. It is even safer than here."

They crawled forward again and reached the barbed wire entanglement.

The men were all flat on the snow-covered ground, with their heads slightly raised to observe what was above them. The snow beneath them began to melt, soaked through their padded clothes, which soon became frozen.

Before them now black barbed wire entanglements stood out clear against the snow, and hanging from them were flare mines — their silvery metal cases gleaming in the dark. Behind the entanglements loomed huge white mounds one after another. Around each big white mound was a ring of small white mounds. In the lower part of the white mounds were black square openings. They were clusters of enemy pillboxes. To the right in a hollow of the hill was a dark moving shadow. It was the enemy sentinel.

"Be sure to keep hidden. Don't expose yourselves." Ho again reminded everyone in a soft voice. Then speaking into the walkie-talkie, he gave the code word telling the forward observation post of the artillery to observe with care. Next he contacted the artillery and machine-gun units ordering them to start shooting so as to draw a response and thus the enemy firing positions would be revealed.

The first shell from our positions flew overhead with a swishing sound and exploded on top of "Old Baldy." Then the machine-guns began to chatter. Red tracer bullets hit the hard walls of the pillboxes and fell on all sides. Our attack had begun.

"Sixth Squad, blow it up!" Battalion Commander Ho ordered.

A terrific earth-rending explosion followed. A big white ball of fire soared into the air, exposing to view the shadows

of two men. In a flash everything was again wrapped in darkness.

"Thud! Thud!" The enemy, in a panic, shot up their flare bombs. The dazzling white light illuminated the hill slope. Three red signals flew out from behind the mountain and rose to a great height. Then from many points shot out tongues of fire. Red and green tracer bullets knit a net of fire while the enemy shot blindly down the slope. Bullets whizzed over the heads of the battalion commander and his group.

With concentrated attention Ho observed every white mound that spat fire and ordered all the company commanders, saying, "Observe carefully and remember the location of every firing position."

The enemy revealed almost all their firing points to us as Battalion Commander Ho had expected. These points were distributed on the main peak in the centre (which we numbered Height 16), on the peak in the left rear (Height 17), on the hill in the right rear (Height 15), and in the hollows between the peaks. By the light of the flare bombs, the observer from the artillery lying beside the battalion commander noted down on paper the precise positions of these firing points.

"Battalion Commander," said Company Commander Li Chih-tang, who had been lying to the right, "the enemy are certainly obedient!"

"Battalion Commander, the topography of the enemy positions and the distribution of their fire-power are about the same as you understood them to be, only much denser," said Commander Chang Chin-sheng of the 2nd Company excitedly.

"The enemy really are very cunning! Look how many new fortifications they have built!" Li Chih-tang said. Suddenly, as if he had discovered a secret, he pulled Ho's sleeve in surprise and pointed to the tongues of fire that spurted out from the ground before them, "A hidden firing position!"

The battalion commander looked attentively on all sides as he listened to Li Chih-tang's words. These hidden firing positions had long been within his expectations, so he nodded

approvingly. He could not believe himself that Li Chih-tang suddenly became so careful and attentive. In his heart he felt very happy and thought to himself: "On-the-spot observation certainly is teaching him a good lesson." He could not help turning aside and giving him a sidelong glance said, "Well, courage alone won't do, will it?"

"Battalion Commander, I will remember what you said. You just watch!"

Since there was no activity down the hill, the enemy, after a period of false alarm, gradually stopped firing, and only shot up a couple of flare bombs every now and then. Soon everything became quiet again.

In accordance with the new situation, Battalion Commander Ho assigned the three companies their respective tasks and made precise arrangements.

"Commander of the mortar company!" he called in a low voice. Wang Ching-chien, commander of the mortar company, quickly crawled up to Ho.

"Your task is to wait till our long-range guns lift their barrage and then to direct your mortars at all the enemy firing points and hit them hard. After this, move away quickly. Understand? My idea is that, you should wait until the enemy think our shelling has ended and begin to come out of their fortifications and at that moment we should let them have it another time. Then, when they are panic-stricken wondering whether our shells will hit them again, we should charge up all of a sudden. Do you understand?" Ho made this statement in a low trembling voice, every word of which sounded as if it had been squeezed out from between his teeth.

"I understand, Battalion Commander!" said Wang Ching-chien, looking at Ho in admiration. Li Chih-tang also glanced at the battalion commander respectfully. From what the battalion commander had just said, he received much enlightenment, which might help him solve the problem of wiping out the hidden firing points.

In front of the battalion commander, right next to the barbed wire entanglements, lay the trunk of a tree, the upper part of which had a few shell-torn branches still pointing upwards. Ho took out a handkerchief, tore it into strips, tied them together to a branch, saying to everyone, "Remember this sign. Bring the platoon and squad leaders here to have a good look. Go back and tell the men in detail what happened. Then revise the relief map and the battle plan according to the results of your observations and do a still better job in military manoeuvres." Then he turned and said to the artillery observer, "Have you recorded everything exactly? Well, check your results carefully with the records of the observation post tomorrow!"

* * *

It was already deep in the night. Battalion Commander Ho was still up. Stooping slightly and supported by his elbows, he pored over the map on the table, gazing at the long and narrow open tract between the red and blue lines drawn on it. Rubbing his eyes, he lifted one of his hands, patted the back of his head and said: "Really, this problem is very important, but how are we to solve it?"

Battalion Instructor Hou sat opposite him across the table, perusing the pile of letters of resolution. Now he lifted his eyebrows, feeling elated, now he knit them when concentrated in thought. Whichever letter of resolution he picked up, his eyes were always drawn first to the two declarations which seemed to force themselves on his attention: "I guarantee to do a good job of preparatory work." "I am determined to fight not only bravely but also wisely!" Moreover, there was generally a concrete project after each of the declarations. Suddenly in one of the letters the words, "safely pass through the open space," caught his eye. He ran through the letter quickly but failed to find any solution to the problem as to how to cross through the tract safely. He knit his brows again and concentrated his

thoughts on those few words. There was no denying that, after the last few days' rallying and education, the awareness of the men had been heightened, and they had thrown themselves heart and soul into the actual work of preparation. Now it was up to the commanders to pool their talents to solve the difficult problems.

The candle had almost burned out, with molten wax spreading all over the candlestick and the tongue of the flame flickering furiously, making the pale yellow sheen inside the cave alternately bright and dark. At the mouth of the cave the messenger, leaning on the wall near a stove, fell into a deep and heavy slumber, snoring the while. The battalion instructor looked at the candlestick and lit another candle, then turned his fatigued eyes on Battalion Commander Ho for a good few minutes. Under the candle light he saw the thin, sunken face, with the flesh and skin tightly stretched over the protruding cheekbones; and, in those cavernous and contemplative eyes were hidden signs of utter exhaustion controlled by sheer willpower, for the battalion commander had not had a decent sleep for several nights.

"Better have a rest! There is still time for deliberation." The instructor approached him and solicitously patted him on the shoulder.

"Instructor Hou," said Ho as if to himself and at the same time in reply to the instructor, his eyes still riveted on the map, "unless a passage through this open tract is found, our attacking forces would have to suffer heavy losses here. I was just considering. . . ."

"Just because of the importance of this problem, you must have a proper sleep; your head will be much clearer after you wake up. If you go on like this, you will be laid low by illness," the instructor still tried to convince him.

"Illness? It can never touch me! Instructor, you see . . ." said Ho, still engrossed in his thoughts. "If our troops could start the attack here, that would be great!"

Instructor Hou felt himself overwhelmed by a mixed feeling of admiration and affection. Unconsciously he let his hand slide off Ho's shoulder and then, in a tone of both concern and respect, he said: "You! You are incorrigible! Once there is a battle, everything else is forgotten!"

"And you?" The battalion commander lifted his head: "Look at your eyes, bloodshot like red peaches!"

"I? . . ." the instructor hesitated for quite a while, then said with a smile: "Hm! This is just an old complaint, I couldn't sleep anyway even if I were to lie down."

"What? 'Insomnia' again. Hm, hm, hm . . ." the battalion commander laughed aloud.

After the battalion commander ceased speaking, there was again a long spell of silence in the cave. The only sounds were the bubbling of the boiling water, the snoring of the messenger inside the cave and the howling of the cold wind outside.

Suddenly, a few shells exploded on the hill slope above the roof of the cave, the interior hummed with the detonation and particles of loosened earth fell through the closely laid beams. The messenger snoring by the stove woke up with a jerk and automatically took the kettle and poured the battalion commander and the instructor each a glass of boiling water.

"Go right back to sleep! It is already one o'clock!" ordered the instructor considerately, yet severely.

"If the chiefs do not sleep, I will not either," the messenger shook his head roguishly and went out.

Ho again fixed his eyes on the map, resting his chin on his left hand; the forefinger of his right hand moved slowly about the map, now lingering for quite a while at one point, now moving along to seek another. His brows were tightly knit and his lips firmly shut. Gradually a smile stole over his face and a bright glow of joy sparkled from his eyes. Abruptly his head shot up and with a bang his fist came down solidly on the map: "Good! Just like this!"

"Instructor!" he cried enthusiastically, as if this close comrade of his were far away. "Come a little closer to this side! You see," he pointed at the foot of "Old Baldy" on the map. "Dig a few tunnels here to hold three companies and let our troops remain in hiding before the battle begins." Then he again pointed at that open tract: "The enemy are deeply interested in this place, so let them pour as much lead and steel as they desire into the mud!"

"Good! Very good, indeed!" Instructor Hou deliberated for a long while, became enthusiastic too and applauded repeatedly: "So the difficult problem of passing through the tract is solved at last!"

"No! Not only that," the battalion commander took up a pencil, vigorously drew a large circle around the place marked with the words, "Old Baldy," and, with a flush of conviction, said: "thus we shall not only prevent our troops from being battered by the enemy artillery during their movements, but also greatly shorten the distance of attack and surprise the enemy on a sudden. After the attack is launched, this place can serve as an ammunition dump near the front and a shelter for the wounded before they can be sent to the rear. In this way," he said, heavily banging the table, "the capture of 'Old Baldy' is a foregone conclusion!"

The battalion commander rose, his shoulders relaxing: "Now, we had better get instructions from the regimental headquarters." He took up the telephone receiver and asked for the regimental commander.

"Is that Zero-One? Yes, I'm Ho Chung-yun . . . the instructor too is still up . . . I should like to report to you on the problem of passing through the open tract. . . . Right! Exactly, it is to dig tunnels to station troops. . . ." Ho's eyebrows soared with rapture. The instructor, carried away too by his elation, bent over closely towards the receiver out of which came the sonorous voice of the regimental commander: "We have just found the same solution. The divisional headquarters

has already issued orders to dig the required tunnels beneath 'Old Baldy' for the stationing of our troops. . . ."

The fact was that, during that very night, while Battalion Commander Ho was poring over the map and racking his brains to find a solution for that open tract, a complete plan for digging the tunnels had already been transmitted from the division to the regiment. The plan not only contained concrete suggestions for the choice of place to station the troops and instructions regarding the process of digging, but also gave counsel on the question of manpower and the effective means of camouflage and concealment, in a concrete, detailed and comprehensive way. The regimental headquarters had decided to call a meeting of officers the following day to transmit the orders. Now that Ho Chung-yun had phoned, the regimental commander thought it best to tell him about the matter.

With every sentence of his chief Ho Chung-yun felt his confidence and strength steadily mounting. How sagacious and circumspect his superiors were! While the idea was just germinating in his mind, they had already made concrete and detailed plans for the entire operation!

After the subject of the tunnels was disposed of, the receiver resounded again with the still more enthusiastic voice of the regimental commander. He said: "Our superiors have decided to support the battle for 'Old Baldy' with more batteries. All our guns are being pushed to the front line, some of them will try close-range firing. We have organized a joint command with the artillery and have drawn up a tentative plan for concerted action. Now the artillery command has detailed a deputy platoon leader to be accompanied by one of our officers for reconnaissance behind the enemy lines. They are to acquaint themselves with conditions there and to decide on the objectives of our bombardment so that we may revise the plan for the joint operation of our infantry and artillery. I am of the opinion that an experienced platoon leader should be dispatched by the 1st Battalion." Winding up, the regimental commander said emphatically: "This is a dangerous mission and is to be entrusted only to one with a high degree of courage and alertness. Whom would you send?"

"Right! I shall consult with the instructor and report to you immediately." With his right hand he shifted the receiver a little out of the way and explained the regimental commander's intention to the instructor.

Ultimately it was decided to dispatch Shao Tso-hsin, leader of the 3rd Platoon in the 2nd Company. Shao was a member of the Communist Party. He was not only brave and quick-witted, but also cool-headed and prudent. He had once led a small group of his men to the rear of the enemy and returned with captured telephone sets, so he was well acquainted with the topography and communications there.

Ho conveyed the decision to his chief.

* * *

Shao Tso-hsin completed his reconnaissance mission behind the enemy lines and returned to report to the battalion commander. He had spent a full day and a night in the enemy's rear and the intense cold had frozen his feet, so that he could hardly walk. Once back at the battalion command he did his best to evade the battalion commander's eyes in order to hide his frost-bitten feet from him.

When the battalion commander perceived Shao's trembling body, he rushed over to help him to a bench: "Have a cup of hot water to warm up a bit!"

The deep concern of the battalion commander imparted a glow of warmth to Shao's heart. Slowly he pulled out a map from the pocket of his shirt and presented it with both hands.

The battalion commander spread the map on the table. It was closely dotted with all kinds of signs: barbed wire entanglements, hidden pillboxes, command posts, tank roads, and positions for guns of various calibres on the lower slopes of the mountain. . . . He concentrated his attention on the map and from time to time turned his head to question Shao.

"We have now a full grasp of the situation on 'Old Baldy,'" said Ho to himself with elation after a lengthy period of thought. He closed his fingers into a tight fist and his face lit up with a glow of determination: "We already have the enemy by the throat. Now let's throttle them with all our might. Throttle them. Staff Officer Lu," he suddenly raised his head. "Inform all companies that there will be a meeting at the battalion headquarters tomorrow morning which all officers above the platoon level shall attend to revise our battle plan." He then turned to Shao Tso-hsin: "You have accomplished something really great! I shall recommend you for citation!"

Shao's face flushed as though he had fever, but he stood up awkwardly. The battalion commander then perceived how his body swayed.

"What? You're wounded?"

"It's nothing, only a bit of frost bite on the feet, Battalion Commander." Shao purposely swelled out his chest.

"Come, let me have a look," Ho shifted the candlestick to the edge of the table and had Shao take off his shoes and socks. His feet were swollen thick and large, the ankles had turned completely purple.

"A little frost bite, eh? It's really serious!" the battalion commander shook his head.

"It doesn't matter, I still can walk. Didn't I just walk back from the enemy's lines?" Shao made an effort to appear unconcerned, but as a matter of fact he was not able to hide his unbearable suffering; even he himself could not make out how he had managed to walk back from the enemy's positions with that pair of feet swollen like eggplants.

"Go and have a rest, you obstinate young fellow!" Ho looked at him with fatherly eyes and rested his right hand on Shao's shoulder.

"No! Battalion Commander! This is only a frost bite and some washing with cold water will cure it. We are having such a great battle and I do not want to be out of it!" He spoke so earnestly and in such a determined manner that the battalion commander found it difficult to dissuade him. "Well, then, at least you must rest up a few days in the company headquarters!"

"But you must let me participate in this battle!" Shao said, not without misgivings.

"Go back and rest. We'll talk about that after you are well again!" The battalion commander extended his hand to Shao. A contented smile skimmed over the corners of Shao's mouth. He took a firm grip of the battalion commander's hand and shook it, gave a salute and turned around to leave the cave. The battalion commander gazed at the receding back and said: "A real hero this is!"

After Shao had gone, Ho's attention turned again to the map. The new conditions had brought about new problems, the plan of the operation had to be revised and supplemented. He planned and deliberated until deep into the night.

That same night, in the regimental headquarters, the regimental commander and the commanding officers of the artillery too were standing around the map and studying together the revised plan for the joint infantry-artillery operations.

* * *

After March 15, 1953, the preparatory work for the attack on "Old Baldy" entered a more crucial stage.

The Sangpopang front already showed signs of spring. The accumulated snow began to thaw, a drizzle continued and the communication trenches were filled with muddy water over a foot deep. The rainy weather brought fresh difficulties to the work of preparation, but the attack could not be postponed. Both fighting and transportation units were making preparations under severe handicaps.

The divisional and regimental commanders regularly visited the units to investigate the progress of work and to help the officers solve important questions of tactics. The artillery forces were moving their heavy cannon to new positions dug

for them in the front lines. In the rear, trucks laden with ammunition braved the enemy fire and rushed forward one by one. Groups of Korean women were feverishly repairing the roads.

On "Old Baldy" the sounds of explosions caused by our cannonading could be heard incessantly. In order to expedite the destruction of enemy barbed wire entanglements, members of the demolition squad tied cans of dynamite together and, in the stillness of the night, stealthily stuck them into the barbed wire. Then as soon as our shells were heard to leave the guns, they lit the fuses, so that the instant the shells detonated, gaps were made in the wire network. In the daytime, to prevent the enemy from repairing the damage, dense fire from our mortars and machine-guns was directed at them without ceasing. In the night small groups of soldiers were active everywhere, so that the enemy were afraid to descend the mountain. Covered by vigilant sentries our men stealthily dug tunnels in seven places at the base of "Old Baldy." With the coming of dawn, the freshly excavated earth was properly covered up to leave no traces. Transport units stocked these newly dug tunnels with munitions, boiled water, steamed bread, fuel, fire-proof curtains, gas masks and other essential supplies. Wireless operators studied their secret codes and repeatedly examined their instruments.

Battalion Commander Ho inspected the various companies night and day. He became even thinner, his eye sockets ever deeper. But lack of sleep never could daunt him. A sense of responsibility for the battle kept inspiring him, supporting him. Straining his eyes and making every effort, he was always hard at work.

More than once he stood, watch in hand, on the mountain slope and gave close attention to the soldiers practising the joint infantry-artillery operations, making sham nocturnal attacks on the enemy and trying out assaults on pillboxes and dug-outs. He made precise calculations of distance and time

and saw to it that the movements were exact, speedy, steady and intensive.

To teach his men the art of mountain-climbing, blasting and charging, he even crawled in muddy water to give them an example. While practising he invented all possible situations for the soldiers to deal with and then in detail pointed out the errors they committed and gave instructions on methods of correction.

One day, he entered the tunnel of the 11th Squad of the 3rd Company. The soldiers jumped up and stood at attention.

"What are you doing, Teng Ming-kuo?" Seeing Teng nestling in a corner writing, the battalion commander went over to accost him.

Teng's face turned deep red in a flash.

"Come, let me have a look," the battalion commander reached out for the small notebook which Teng was handing him.

"The great soldier — Chiu Shao-yun. . . ."[1]

The battalion commander read those few characters though somewhat askew and out of line. "Ah! Writing about the deeds of a hero! Well, now is the chance to be a hero yourself!"

Seemingly embarrassed, Teng looked at the battalion commander and said: "I shall try to be one, Battalion Commander!"

Since the preparations for the battle, there had developed in the 3rd Company a big campaign to emulate the heroes. Not only each man of the company wanted to become a hero himself, but also they wanted to make theirs a heroic company. Battalion Commander Ho felt greatly satisfied over these valiant aspirations. "But to become heroes you must have the capabilities of a hero. How are you refining your capabilities?" He bade the men to be seated and said smilingly:

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[1] A martyr of the Chinese People's Volunteers.

"Well, let me ask you now: After an intense cannonade, how are you going to open a way for the assault, Teng Ming-kuo?"

"Before the enemy in the remaining pillboxes recover from the stunning effects of our bombardment, we must hasten with our onslaught and blast any barbed wire entanglements that are yet undestroyed and, once the first line is swept clear, we must take advantage of the confusion created by the smoke to clear the second. . . ." The battalion commander nodded in assent.

"Chang Fu-hsiang, what do you say? How would you attack the enemy's pillboxes?"

"First of all we must develop the spirit of militant daring, organize covering fire and cut asunder the enemy units by ferocious thrusts, and then . . ." Chang replied fluently.

"Now, how to attack the tunnels? You . . ." the battalion commander pointed to a very young soldier. "What is your name? Wait a minute, let me think. Right! A newcomer, Wu Erh-hua, right? Good, you speak!"

"By making use of the corners in the tunnels for shelter, we can penetrate deeper and deeper, or by the use of hand-grenades. . . ." Wu Erh-hua answered quite adequately.

The battalion commander then questioned some of the others and their replies, too, were satisfactory. He thought to himself: "The political work has thoroughly sharpened the minds of the men, and so has the education on military techniques." However, he made an effort not to show excessive gratification, nor did he himself want to feel satisfied. So he said in a controlled voice: "To be able to say it right is not the same as doing it right. We shall have to see the actual doing." And, to test the result of the training, he took the 11th Squad up the slope of the mountain for practice. The result of the practice proved equally satisfactory to him. But he still asked the men of the squad to make further preparations, not to be in the least bit complacent, and not to relax.

With preparations being intensified the battalion commander's work became heavier and more exacting, and his time for sleep less and less. His spirit of working to the neglect of meals and sleep was well known to his men. As he was regularly with them, they watched with anxiety how his features had become more and more emaciated. An old hero of the division, he was greatly admired and loved by his men. They were most solicitous about his health. Every time he came to visit a squad, the soldiers prepared some sugared water for him. In spite of the difficulty of supplying provisions to the front lines, in spite of his repeated rejection of their offers, they invariably managed to make some dumplings or noodles for him. During the days of intensive preparation, regularly at night, from various companies came solicitous telephone calls to the battalion headquarters, asking whether the battalion commander had returned, whether he had gone to sleep and requesting that something be done to make him go to bed.

Instructor Hou Shu-lin too tried in every way possible to get him to take more rest. He often called up by telephone to say: "I shall take over tonight. You must rest!" He would get the battalion commander to lie down, then blow out the candle and take away the matches. But, if the battalion commander thought that a problem on hand had not been solved, such tactics were of no avail. The closer the time for battle, the more problems aroused his attention and the busier he became. But he was never impetuous, like the watch on his wrist, he was always steady and systematic, executing his tasks according to the formulated plan.

The men were different. They believed that the preparation was already adequate. Wherever the battalion commander appeared, they surrounded him, vying with each other in asking when the fighting would begin. Calmly he replied:

"Once preparation is completed!" This was invariably his answer to them.

Then the men would say, "Battalion Commander, you've come for inspection countless times. We're now well prepared and are expecting nothing but your order for action."

At such times he always reproached them sternly: "Comrades, do not be easily satisfied, check up a few times more! With each check-up you will always find some gaping holes. There is still time to stop up these new holes. But, once fighting has begun, it would be too late!" At the beginning, when the men had not sufficiently realized the difficulty of the task facing them and were given to belittling the enemy, it was necessary to explain these difficulties to them and to insist on full preparation; but when preparation was nearing completion and they would again tend to be lulled into self-satisfaction, it would be necessary to impose upon them severer demands of perfection. He tried to search for defects, however small they might be, to convince his men.

"Comrades! There is still much to be done! You must have patience. The enemy on 'Old Baldy' have been expecting our attack all the time and we do not want to hit them in a half-hearted way and let them get away easy. On the contrary, we must deal them a telling blow, pulverize them and let them have a taste of our fury. The more thorough our preparation, the harder will our blow fall on their heads. You must understand that the sooner our preparation is completed, the sooner will the order for attack be given. Comrades! Do not relax for a single moment!" Untiringly the battalion commander repeated these words to them.

The work of preparation was progressing with great momentum.

* * *

It was the evening of March 22, 1953. The sky was pitch black and the stars were shrouded in dark clouds.

Having drained cups of "Victory Wine" and smoked "Victory Cigarettes" offered by the divisional cultural and art troupe on behalf of the divisional command, the soldiers of the

1st Battalion, eager for fighting, pinned on their chests "Heroic Flowers" presented by the divisional command and slung across their shoulders bandoliers filled with "Glorious Cartridges." Having written down their resolutions in the "Expedition Notebooks" and holding aloft the red flag inscribed with their names, they came quietly out of the tunnel and spread out in the direction of the enemy positions along different routes.

Regimental Political Commissar Chang Yao-hsien, Deputy Regimental Commander Chen Yu-tsai, Battalion Commander Ho Chung-yun and Battalion Instructor Hou Shu-lin all stood at the entrance of the tunnel to see the expeditionary troops off and shake hands with them one by one.

"May success attend you!"

"May you come back meritorious heroes!"

"You must keep under cover and not expose yourselves."

The soldiers were elated at the prospect of fighting and responded with great confidence.

Our artillery men kept attracting enemy gunfire by intermittent shelling and their shells exploded, too, on our artillery positions. But a dead silence prevailed at the foot of "Old Baldy": there were neither rifle shots nor cannon fire. The frogs were croaking in the fields. The stream was flowing tranquilly through the gullies. The expeditionary troops walked quietly down the hill slope, crawled towards the open tract and gradually disappeared into the darkness.

Battalion Commander Ho stood in the trench near the entrance of the tunnel, facing the inscrutable night, staring and listening for a long time. A feeling of extreme strain seized him. If at that moment the enemy should concentrate their gunfire, one barrage after another, on the completely exposed tract, then all that had been done for the past few months, particularly in the last ten days or more, would come to naught. Over-anxiety kept gnawing at Ho's heart. He tried hard to breathe. He felt as though he was being stifled.

"Report! Battalion Commander!" The messenger suddenly appeared by his side. "We have just received word from the front lines that our troops have reached the tunnels for hiding in safety."

The initial victory was won. But Battalion Commander Ho immediately dropped the smile caused by the presentiment of victory, for another worry had cropped up in his mind — the men had to hold out for twenty-four hours running in the narrow and low-roofed tunnels with their thin and contaminated air; if any one should fail to stick it out, should trifle with discipline, and expose himself, the enemy would tear down the hill and block the entrances to the tunnels. . . . The battalion commander turned round, went into the temporary command post, and said to the telephone operator in a firm tone, "Tell all the company commanders that strict discipline must be enforced in the tunnels in accordance with the regulations. No one is allowed to venture out. Impress on everyone the idea that he is part of a whole. Keep vigilant guard outside the entrances.

"Furthermore, report to the joint infantry-artillery command post and demand that all the artillery positions, machine-gun positions and observation posts keep a close watch over the movements of the enemy, tighten the blockade and allow not one single enemy soldier to come down the hill."

Having completed this series of tasks, he felt somewhat relieved.

* * *

It was March 23. The attack on "Old Baldy" would start that evening.

The men of the 1st Battalion waiting with great eagerness for fighting orders huddled together in the tunnels, face to face, knee touching knee and backs against the wall. The tunnels were low and narrow; one had to get into them on all fours. They swarmed with so many people that the farther one went in, the thinner and more oppressive the air grew.

Neither candles nor matches could be lit. The tunnels were as swelteringly hot as steam baths; the men's clothes were wringing wet. All were sweating though they had taken off their padded coats and shirts. They gasped for breath with their mouths wide open, their heads swelling and aching. Some of them dipped their towels in the cool water and applied them to their foreheads. Those sitting at the entrances exchanged places of their own accord with those inside who needed to get a breath of cool, fresh air.

Political Instructor Tao Jui-liang stayed with the soldiers in the tunnel of the 3rd Company. Sweat was trickling down his broad cheeks in a ceaseless flow, his chest under his dripping shirt heaving violently. He tried hard to suppress his panting, hoping to bolster up the soldiers with his great fortitude. The man sitting next to him, having discovered his hard and heavy breathing, which he tried to conceal but to no avail, tugged at him and said in a broken tone, "Instructor, you had better go to get some fresh air."

"No, no . . . the comrades inside . . . are in a worse plight. Let them . . . go . . . out . . . first." He drew a deep breath with a great effort in an attempt to speak more calmly and coherently, but he fell short of breath, his voice trembling violently.

"Comrades . . . victory demands . . . of us . . . great fortitude . . . in the face of hardships.

"Learn from Chiu Shao-yun's . . . great spirit of . . . adhering to . . . discipline! To achieve victory, we . . . must overcome . . . all conceivable hardships!"

These works ran through every fighter like a strong electric current, adding to his strength in surmounting difficulties. The fighters whispered to each other encouragingly:

"For the red flag we must set our teeth to stick it out!"

"Let's stick it out! We'll soon square accounts with the enemy!"

"Let's hold out for the time being. We'll have our revenge in the evening. Then the enemy will be suffering much more than we are now."

The soldiers in the cave took turns to catch a breath of fresh air at the entrance, but only a few could do so at each opportunity. Besides it took much time and great effort so that some of them fainted. All the companies continuously reported to the battalion command post by telephone and wireless that the caves remained stuffy, some men had swooned, but that the soldiers were still in high spirits and discipline was well observed.

"Comrades! Stick it out in any case." Battalion Commander Ho repeated his words of instruction over the telephone. Though he was all affection for the soldiers, yet at this juncture when victory was almost within his grasp he had to be strict with the men facing temporary hardships. A victory, so he well knew, is achieved through overcoming innumerable difficulties. Now and then he went out of the tunnel at the command post with field glasses to take a look around; there was not a shadow of a person to be seen at the foot of "Old Baldy."

The evening to which the battalion commander had been looking forward came at last. He could no longer hold himself back. He was anxious about the comrades in the tunnels for hiding and worried over the situation at the front lines. If only he could go to the tunnels at once to see his comrades-in-arms! He asked Shih Chao-hsun, deputy leader of the communications platoon, to bring the radio operator and messengers to the tunnel of the 3rd Company after dark and there to look for him. Then after giving this command, he made arrangements to start off earlier accompanied by one messenger.

At the moment of departure for "Old Baldy," Regimental Political Commissar Chang pressed Battalion Commander Ho's hand, saying, "You must direct your units well, be strictly

punctual and act on the plan. Furthermore, you are the commanding officer; you mustn't go too far ahead in attacking."

Deputy Regimental Commander Chen also gave him affectionate instructions:

"Whenever you find anything important or have any requests to make, you may report to me. May success attend you!"

Instructor Hou pulled Deputy Platoon Leader Shih Chao-hsun to one side and privately requested him to look after the safety of the battalion commander. Then he held Battalion Commander Ho's hand in a firm grasp for a long time and said, "You needn't worry about the rear. Supplies of ammunition and teams of stretcher-bearers will arrive as soon as the attack is started."

Ho had much to say, but he could not utter a single word for the moment. So he merely nodded in agreement. At last he said in an excited voice, "We are sure to put up a good fight!" So saying he stepped out into the grey evening with the messenger.

* * *

Battalion Commander Ho entered the tunnel occupied by the 3rd Company. At the sight of him, the fighters got exceedingly excited as if they no longer suffered from the oppressive air in the cave. The battalion commander was greatly delighted to see these young soldiers, who were still in high spirits though they had suffered in the cave for twenty-four hours.

All of a sudden a young man, his face glowing with health, crawled over and said:

"Battalion Commander! I wish you success in the forthcoming assault that you may go to see Chairman Mao a second time."

"Well, how about you, Teng Ming-kuo?"

"Me? I'll learn from you and try my best to do the same."

A young soldier standing close to Company Commander Li Chih-tang broke in:

"Battalion Commander, I'll carry your luggage for you on your way to Peking."

"Ah! Kao Chia-shan, you're here too," said the battalion commander in surprise.

"Hey. He has a craze for heroes. Nothing can keep him from coming!" Company Commander Li said with a smile, casting a sly and oblique glance at Kao Chia-shan.

The battalion commander stroked Kao's head and said to him affectionately, "Well, try your best. But remember you mustn't behave like a baby!"

"No, I won't behave like a baby."

Kao Chia-shan rolled his eyes roguishly and stole a look at the battalion commander.

Arriving at the cave of the 2nd Company, the battalion commander found the company commander sitting at the telephone, head bowed, deep in thought.

"Chang Chin-sheng, what are you thinking about?"

Hearing the battalion commander's voice, Company Commander Chang sprang to his feet and said: "Battalion Commander, what else can I be thinking of? I'm considering how to put up a good fight!"

"Well, how is the soldiers' morale?"

"You listen!" replied the company commander, indicating the fighters inside the cave. They were discussing informally about tactics, and voicing their resolution to defeat the enemy. The battalion commander sidled his way in. The soldiers tried to stand up but their legs were too tightly jammed together.

"Be seated, comrades."

Catching sight of Shao Tso-hsin, he asked, "Are your feet all right?"

"Oh, yes, I can walk. The frost bite has been cured," replied Shao. But actually his feet were still dotted with blue and purple patches, which caused him excruciating pain when walking.

"Then lead your men to fight a good battle."

"Rest assured. We are sure to destroy the enemy command post."

After making a round of visits to the caves, the battalion commander crept close to the barbed wire entanglements alone to take a look; there was not any sign of activity; apparently the enemy had not found out what was going on in our positions. Then he crept back and gave orders to the different companies:

"Move out of the caves, scatter, keep under cover and wait for the order to attack!"

The soldiers lay in hiding around the caves, waiting impatiently. None expected to crouch for long, their postures suggesting their eagerness to jump to their feet and rush forward. Looking at his watch, the battalion commander tried his best to hold the soldiers back and repeated his instructions:

"No one is allowed to budge an inch without my order."

It was 19:30 o'clock. On the right flank the units which were to launch an open attack on the mountain northwest of Tokundong started firing. Before long, rifle shots rang from Sokhyondong North Mountain on the left flank. The enemy sent a flight of flares whirling into the sky like a galaxy of electric lights glimmering over a city. Red and green tracer bullets were criss-crossing over the mountain slopes. Volleys of shells exploded here and there, sending up columns of fire. The enemy concentrated their gunfire on the two mountaintops.

"Clever enemy! You have miscalculated. We have not as yet stretched out our iron fists, which will deal you crushing blows," thought the battalion commander in secret delight.

At 19:39 news came through the wireless that the enemy positions on the mountain northwest of Tokundong had been captured. The announcement of victory made the soldiers all the more eager to fight.

"Battalion Commander, let's charge!"

Some of them rose to their feet and moved a few steps forward.

"Keep down! You must act according to the plan. Don't move!" said the battalion commander in a severe voice, with a wave of his hand. Hearing such a stern voice, the soldiers crouched down silently. The battalion commander fixed his gaze on his watch which showed 19:40. There were still 20 minutes to go before the long-awaited attack was to begin — twenty anxious and unbearable minutes.

* * *

In the joint infantry-artillery command post Regimental Commander Liang and the commanding officers of the artillery were looking at their watches, telephone receivers held fast in their hands. So were Regimental Political Commissar Chang, Deputy Regimental Commander Chen and Battalion Political Instructor Hou in the temporary command post of the battalion.

In all artillery positions the chief gunners, too, stood watch in hand with telephone receivers close to their ears. The gunners put themselves in a firing posture. Standing in front of "Old Baldy," Battalion Commander Ho kept his eyes glued to his luminous watch with his mouth over the telephone transmitter. On both sides lay the soldiers in burning anxiety, breathing audibly.

The second hand and the minute hand met on the number "12." It was 20:00 o'clock sharp.

"Open fire!" came the solemn and resounding order from the joint infantry-artillery command post. Simultaneously all the artillery positions relayed the order.

The valleys echoed with the air-rending roars of shells, flames gushing out of the guns lit up the range of mountains along the Sangpopang front and the mounting spring tide of the Ikgokchon River.

Volleys of shells whistled overhead, showering down among the rows of barbed wire entanglements and the densely located pillboxes and on the artillery positions behind the enemy front lines, resounding like prolonged and deafening peals of

thunder. The tops of the mountains were wrapped up in clouds of smoke, which all of a sudden darkened the enemy flares dotting the sky.

The soldiers got excited and shouted:

"Hit 'em hard! Let the American devils have a taste of our shells."

"Comrades! Capture the best weapons and send them to the artillery men first in congratulation of their success."

* * *

Platoon Leader Shao Tso-hsin gazed intently at the columns of fire whipped up by the shells exploding in the enemy's rear, in an effort to locate the places where the shells had fallen. But the pandemonium created by the deafening roar of the guns prevented him from detecting anything. He merely found out that the enemy batteries had not fired a single shot; nor had one shell fallen on the open tract through which our 1st Battalion had passed the night before. Even the enemy on the flanks had suddenly stopped firing back at our neighbouring positions. Shao shouted with joy, "We have hit the targets. The enemy guns are silenced."

The fierce and furious bombarding lasted for full four minutes. At 20:04 the order to "lift the barrage" issued from the joint infantry-artillery command post and soon big dazzling tongues of fire thrust themselves out towards the depth of the enemy positions, accompanied by the booming of shells.

At the same time Battalion Commander Ho clenched his teeth and with a flourish of his hand gave the thrilling order: "Charge!"

In practically no time several hundred brave fighters sprang to their feet and strode into the area which their guns had been bombarding, spreading out along five routes and heading for the main peak of "Old Baldy" and Height 17. The red flag inscribed with the names of the fighters was fluttering in the fire and smoke and moving forward with the attacking units.

An uneasy dead silence fell on the mountain: there was not a single rifle shot. Our fighters were rushing forward bravely, and the battalion commander with his messenger and telephone operator followed close on their heels.

Of the 3rd Company's various platoons making the assault on the main peak, the 3rd Platoon advanced fastest with deputy leader of the demolition squad Teng Ming-kuo and four other fighters in the fore front. Scaling the shell-torn wire entanglements, they scudded towards the top of the mountain, carrying explosives in their arms or on their shoulders. Suddenly the seventh and last row of spiralled wire network blocked their way. At that time the enemy soldiers in the remaining pillboxes woke up in bewilderment. They went into action, firing fiercely in the direction of the entanglement.

It was imperative to break through the barbed wire at this critical juncture.

"Dynamiters! Be quick! Gunners give cover!" the battalion commander ordered at once, meanwhile asking the telephone operator to get in touch with the units in our front lines and order them to pin the enemy down with heavy machine-guns, infantry guns and mortars.

Our light and heavy machine-guns were roaring and our infantry guns and mortars were pounding the enemy positions. As a result the enemy gunfire slackened off.

"Blow it up. Be quick!" urged Teng Ming-kuo, using his automatic rifle to give cover to Li Kao-piao, who darted forward, stuck a canister of explosives in the seventh entanglement and drew the fuse. But only a small breach was made. The barbed wire network still stood 1.5 metres in height and over 2 metres wide.

At the flash of the explosion the men of the shock platoon sprang to their feet and charged, but the undestroyed entanglement still blocked the way. The red flag rustled in the air but could not move forward.

Now the enemy resumed firing more violently, inflicting some casualties on the shock platoon every minute. The

fighters could not stay long under the enemy fire, but it was too late to effect another blasting. At the critical moment Teng Ming-kuo jumped to his feet and cried:

"Comrades! We have sworn an oath that we would force a way for the attacking units. Now is the time for us to do so."

So saying, he moved a step forward, threw himself on top of the entanglement and swung his right hand as he commanded, "Step over me!" Instantly four soldiers of the demolition squad, Chang Fu-hsiang, Ting Chao-kuei, Wu Erh-hua and Li Kao-piao followed suit.

Hsu Ching-chin, leader of the 3rd Platoon, instinctively hesitated for a moment. How could he step on this "human bridge," built of the living bodies of his own comrades?

"Hurry up! Hurry up! Don't hesitate!" shouted the dynamiters with burning anxiety.

He turned round and shouted to his men, "Learn from the spirit of the demolition squad and charge!" He stepped up the sloping back of Teng Ming-kuo and jumped over the entanglement. Following his example, one fighter after another managed to get over the wire barrier on the backs of their comrades-in-arms and headed for the main peak.

The red flag resumed its rapid advance. The colour-bearer fell, but the flag was immediately taken up by another, who raised it aloft and moved on. Approaching the main peak, colour-bearer Tien Shun-hua fell. Tan Tsun-chiu immediately hurried forward, picked up the red flag and moved on with it. But soon Tan fell too. Seeing this, Chang Ting-hsiao shot forward, raised the red flag aloft and charged up the peak. With the red flag fluttering before them, the shock troops penetrated towards the main peak like sharp daggers. At the very last Chang Ting-hsiao was wounded in the chest. But he, enduring his sharp pain, staggered on a few more steps, reached the peak and planted the red flag in the loose mud the shells had turned up.

By then the attacking units had climbed to the peak from different directions. On the left flank the 2nd Company had captured Height 17. Li Chih-tang, commander of the 3rd Company, shouted with excitement, "Give the signal. Be quick!" The signalman Kao Chia-shan raised his signal pistol above his head, sending three red flares up into the dark sky. The main peak of "Old Baldy" was taken! The victorious red flag — the invincible though shell-torn banner inscribed with the names of the heroes and stained with their blood — was fluttering over the highest peak of "Old Baldy."

Before long Battalion Commander Ho reached the top of the mountain and appeared under the red flag. Looking at his watch, he found that only four minutes had passed since the attack began.

* * *

Immediately after the main peak was taken, Battalion Commander Ho gave fresh orders:

"Don't give the enemy the chance to catch their breath, act on the plan and charge towards the enemy pillboxes! Take Height 15!"

The shock troops of the 3rd Company, flitting by the enemy pillboxes and skirting the communication trenches, made for Height 15. They did not at once wipe out the surviving enemy in the pillboxes, leaving this job to the rear guard.

As soon as Chang Chin-sheng, commander of the 2nd Company, reached the top of Height 17, he ordered Shao Tso-hsin, leader of the 3rd Platoon, to rush towards the enemy company command post with his unit.

The soldiers split up into many small groups, penetrating through the heart of the enemy like sharp-edged knives. Whether on the ridges or at the slopes, on the mountains or in the valleys, battle was raging around the enemy pillbox clusters. The recoilless guns, machine-guns and automatic rifles were all bearing down upon the dark entrances of the pillboxes, pounding at them with a vengeance. Under cover of

the concentrated fire, the fighters pressed ahead, moving close to their objectives, climbing to their tops and hurling hand-grenades and anti-tank hand-grenades into the dark loop-holes. The pillboxes were being destroyed amid flashes of explosions, clods of mud, blocks of stone, fragments of gunny bags and helmets shooting up into the sky.

The remnants of the enemy were still carrying on their desperate struggle. From the loop-holes of their strongholds they fired machine-guns and automatic rifles; their flame-throwers spurted red-hot tongues of fire. Tanks came rumbling up, sending shells and bullets in all directions. The stinging smell of smoke and oil mixed with clouds of dust and dirt filled the air. In the heavy fog of smoke, our fighters, giving cover to each other, charged towards the blazing pillboxes and rumbling tanks.

Two tanks were destroyed and one pillbox after another collapsed.

Shao Tso-hsin limped along, bringing the fighters close to the command post of the enemy company. Hsiao Han-chen, deputy leader of the 6th Squad, was the first to get inside it and was hit immediately on the right side of his chest by the carbine of an enemy company commander. Hsiao staggered for a moment and then summoned all his strength to throw himself on his opponent, who, snatching up another rifle with a bayonet, thought to finish off Hsiao; but the bayonet got caught on the chamber of Hsiao's automatic rifle. He forthwith took a big stride and forced Hsiao, who had bled too profusely to struggle on, to the ground. Nevertheless Hsiao fumbled for his automatic rifle, whose muzzle happened to be pressed against the belly of the son of a bitch. What a joy! Hsiao Han-chen pulled the trigger and a round of bullets put an end to that dog's life. . . .

News of victory flew thick and fast to the command post of the battalion on Height 16. Trophies and captives were sent there in an endless stream. . . .

Battalion Commander Ho was in a state of extreme tension all the while. He kept asking his messenger to pass around the order to wipe out clean all remnants of the enemy, while he himself was busy contacting the artillery positions, now asking the gunners to repel the enemy in the gullies who were preparing to launch a counter-assault, and now sending a piece of artillery over to support another unit. Sometimes he ran out of the command post himself and sent someone to organize the soldiers of scattered units for continued fighting.

The communications operators shouted over the radiophones in hoarse voices. The battalion commander asked them to report to the regimental command post at short intervals and to conclude their reports with the refrain:

"You may rest assured. The attack is going on well. Our men are attacking bravely and skilfully. They are all excellent fighters."

Along with the young messenger Chang Chi-chu and the signalman Kao Chia-shan, Company Commander Li Chih-tang followed closely behind the shock troops, heading for Height 15.

In a communication trench leading to Height 15, the company commander was struck down by a stray bullet which had come from the huge pillbox on the left flank. Signalman Kao immediately threw himself on the ground and crept close to the company commander, who had fainted away, his belly oozing blood, his intestines exposed to view. Kao felt inclined to cry, but he managed to keep back his tears and gasped, "Give cover! Be quick, Chang Chi-chu!"

Chang Chi-chu in trying to save the commander also got wounded, hit in the legs by two machine-gun bullets, his trousers soaked with blood. He could tell from Kao's hurried voice that the company commander had either been killed or badly wounded. Resting his left arm on the ground, he turned to one side, raised himself up with a great effort and threw a hand-grenade at the pillbox with his right hand.

Taking advantage of the interval when the enemy machine-guns were silenced by Chang's grenade, Kao Chia-shan immediately carried the company commander to a curve in the communication trench to keep under cover. At that moment Wang Chuan-hua, a medical orderly, made his appearance. Leaving the company commander in his care and picking up an anti-tank hand-grenade, Kao Chia-shan, without saying a word, crept towards the big enemy pillbox. On approaching the fortress, he suddenly jumped to his feet and pitched the hand-grenade into its entrance. After a loud explosion, red-hot tongues of fire burst out of the loop-holes. Then he turned round and ran towards the company commander. It was not until then that he found Chang Chi-chu lying wounded in the communication trench. Kao Chia-shan took him on his shoulders, placed him down beside the company commander and then untied his first-aid bag to bandage him. The medical orderly was still dressing the company commander's wounds.

"Wang Chuan-hua, how is the company commander?" asked Kao, in a low, deep voice.

The medical orderly shook his head and kept silent, his throat choking with sorrow.

A few tear drops gleamed in Kao's eyes, but he immediately wiped them off with his sleeve.

"Charge! Take Height 15!" shouted the company commander as soon as he came to himself from his stupor. His lips trembling, he shouted and shouted as if to get everyone to hear him. But actually his voice was so feeble that no one could hear except those bending over him.

"Have you taken Height 15? Tell me. Quick! Quick!" urged Company Commander Li. Supporting himself on his trembling hands, he tried to raise up his body to have a look around, but in vain; he was too exhausted to move.

"Company Commander! What do you want to do?" asked Kao, looking at him with sorrowful eyes. Wang Chuan-hua hurried over to support the company commander.

"Quick! Quick! Raise me up. Let me have a look at Height 15!" shouted the company commander with impatience. Wang Chuan-hua and Kao Chia-shan propped him up gently.

Right in front, half-way up, the slope of Height 15 was ablaze with flashes of explosions, against which the figures of our soldiers could be seen moving forward in waves — now crouching and crawling, now springing to their feet and charging forward. . . . But the enemy on Height 15 were still firing ferociously. Height 15 had not yet been taken.

"Where is the company political instructor?" asked the company commander in a feeble voice.

Wang sniffled and tears trickled down his cheeks. The instructor had fallen while leading the 2nd Platoon to attack Height 15. For fear that the company commander might feel sorry, Wang suppressed his sobs and answered calmly, "The instructor is in front."

"Go and tell him and all the officers and soldiers that they must take Height 15 even if they have to fight to the last man," the company commander cried out in a stern voice. In the light of the bright flares, Kao saw the company commander's lips twitching convulsively.

"Company Commander! You may rest assured. We certainly will take Height 15," said Kao in a loud voice to comfort him.

He nodded agreement and said in an unusually gentle voice, "That's good. My dear comrades! Lay me down." Then he lay dead on the ground with his eyes half closed like a man completely exhausted.

At that time Battalion Commander Ho stood at the entrance to the huge pillbox on the main peak of "Old Baldy", which served as his temporary command post, staring for a long time at the stretch of fire on the slope of Height 15. He stood motionless even when the shells were exploding around him and clods of mud splashed over the entrance to the stronghold.

One fighter of the 3rd Company shot up to the entrance.

"Where is your company commander?" asked the battalion commander hurriedly.

"He. . . ."

"What is wrong with him?" urged the commander.

"He . . . he . . . has fallen!" answered the soldier in a low voice, sorrowfully averting his face.

The battalion commander stood speechless, biting his lips. Clenching his fists in anger, he suddenly darted out of the pillbox. He usually did this when he found that his battalion suffered heavy casualties in the fury of battle. That was what the regimental commander and the regimental political commissar worried about.

Shih Chao-hsun, deputy leader of the communications platoon, immediately hurried out to stop the commander. Conscious that he was acting on impulse, Ho retraced his steps and sank down heavily on the steel-plate bed. He exerted the utmost effort to calm himself down and then walked up to the telephone operator, saying, "Report to the regimental command post that the commander of the 3rd Company has fallen in battle and that fighting is still raging on the slope of Height 15. . . ."

The operator shouted a series of codes over the telephone in a hoarse voice. Then he mechanically turned his face to the commander, asking, "Battalion Commander, what else shall I report?"

The battalion commander thought hard for a moment and then said in a tone of finality:

"Say that I have decided to use mobile units. This time we are certain to take Height 15!"

Since the offensive had started, the 2nd and 3rd Companies had repeatedly asked for reinforcements. But the battalion commander had always answered in a firm and clear voice:

"Organize the existing forces and keep on fighting!"

He had reserved the mobile units with great resolution until the last minute. But now it was high time to use them. Turning round, he said, "Send for the commander of the 1st Company."

A few minutes later Commander Meng Ching-fu of the 1st Company turned up at the command post. The battalion commander pulled him to the entrance of the pillbox.

"Go and support them. You must capture it," said the battalion commander, pointing at Height 15 where the battle was raging.

"Battalion Commander, I assure you that we'll take it," he said in a determined voice. On hearing the battle assignment, Meng became elated and instantly turned round to go.

"Wait a minute! How many men are you going to take with you?"

"The whole company!" answered Meng, knowing that the soldiers like him had got so impatient for fighting that they could not hold themselves back any longer.

The battalion commander shook his head and said, "It is not necessary to throw the whole company in, one platoon is enough. The enemy have been exhausted, a single man of your mobile unit is able to deal with tens of enemy soldiers. Moreover you may suffer heavier casualties than necessary. We must avoid needless loss of manpower."

"Yes, Battalion Commander, I myself will lead one platoon."

"Carry out the orders. I'll give you artillery support."

After the company commander had left, the battalion commander, glancing at his watch, walked up to the telephone operator and said, "Ask the artillery to pound the top of Height 15."

One minute later the first volley of shells burst on Height 15, accompanied by deafening roars. . , .

The artillery fire died away. It was followed by sharp rifle shots and hand-grenade explosions for a short time. Then over the top of Height 15 rose a red signal flare. The height was taken and the battle won!

The battalion commander's eyes fell on the luminous dial of his wrist watch. It was 22:30 o'clock.

"The battle did not take long."

Looking up at the iridescent signal glittering in the sky and the red flag fluttering over "Old Baldy," and with a powerful swing of his arm, the battalion commander said:

'Let the enemy brag about their most 'solid' positions! 'Old Baldy' is now in our hands. Our fighters have carried out their pledges. We can with pride call this height the 'Red Flag Mountain.' "

THE HEROIC TANK

LI CHENG and LI PO-PING

Yang Ah-ju, born in 1921, is a native of Hsinwu Village, Huangyen County, Chekiang Province. He joined the Chinese People's Liberation Army in July 1945, became a member of the Chinese Communist Party in May 1948 and joined the Chinese People's Volunteers in June 1952, serving as platoon leader. For his achievement in the battle for Height 346.6 at Chulwon County during the summer offensive in 1953, where he directed Tank "215" in the destruction of three enemy tanks, he was given a first-class merit and the title of Hero of the Second Class by the CPV Command on September 24, 1953. In October 1953, the Standing Committee of the Supreme People's Assembly of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea conferred on him an Order of Freedom and Independence, Second Class, and an Order of Military Merit.

— EDITOR

In the pitch-black night of July 6, 1953, torrents of heavy rain were pouring down. The Ikgokchon River was in spate.

In the storm a tank was heard rumbling along. It was crawling in the swamps with the muzzle of its gun turned upwards and its gigantic hull shaking as if it were a fierce beast.

The white figures "215" on the two sides of the turret were illuminated by the flashes of lightning in the sky. Raindrops

beat in through the half-open port-hole, falling on the sweating face of Chen Wen-kuei, the driver. Without bothering to wipe off the perspiration, he was holding on to the steering-rod with both hands, his right foot stepping on the throttle and keeping his eyes fixed steadily on the pitch-dark road. The crew inside put their eyes close to the loop-holes and the periscope, trying to peep out. Although there was nothing to be seen in the darkness outside, yet they all wished to catch a glimpse of Height 346.6 through the night sky. For the assignment given to this tank was: "Move up to the position of attack tonight and open fire at 9 o'clock tomorrow night. Wipe out the three American tanks on Height 346.6 so as to give support to the infantry in capturing Sokhyondong North Mountain."

The enemy were only 3,000 metres away from here; besides, the area was within reach of their guns. The road, barely wide enough for a single tank to get through, had been built under enemy gunfire by our infantry comrades with earth, logs and rocks. And it took them twenty nights to construct it. Though completed only a short time before, it had already become gutted and uneven, and the shell holes were full of muddy water from the incessant torrents of rain. The heavy tank rumbling along the road had ploughed up the earth so that two ditches were formed and the condition of the road-bed became still worse, with logs and rocks lying helter-skelter. The tank was tottering like a giant drunkard, lurching along terrifically.

Yang Ah-ju, platoon leader and concurrently the tank's commander, was involuntarily wabbling right and left with the bumping tank. He felt quite uneasy. He knew that the road foundation was not very strong, since, as a tank commander, he had taken part in the direction of the work when the infantrymen were building the road. Nevertheless, they had to move forward to Kangkundong to get ready for the attack if the American tanks on Height 346.6 were to be destroyed. There the range was wide, the target near and, be-

sides, there were natural shelters around. To get to Kangkun-dong, it was necessary to cross this tough quagmire. But in this region the mud was ankle-deep everywhere. He turned his ear to listen to the outside. The rain continued to pour steadily. With the pattering rain were mingled the violent rumblings of gunfire and explosions of hand-grenades from the front.

"We are soon coming to a large shell crater. You will find the Ladle Curve there. Keep a sharp lookout."

"Yes!" said Chen Wen-kuei, putting the engine into high gear, lightly pushing forward the steering-rod and driving with exceeding caution. At that time, the enemy were again bombarding this swampy area, clusters of fire flaring up around the tank in the heavy rainfall. The tankmen listened, for it seemed as if someone were pounding tin cans outside.

"Platoon Leader, I can't steer the way to the Ladle Curve."

"How's that?" asked Yang Ah-ju, feeling as though his heart were suddenly suspended in mid-air.

"I can't make the tank turn round the bend."

"Stop! I'll go out to lead the way for you." Yang Ah-ju opened the rear half of the hatch.

"Oh, you can't, Platoon Leader. The battery fire is raging furiously outside," Hsu Chih-chiang, the chief gunner, said anxiously.

Yang Ah-ju, jumping out of the tank, seemed not to have heard Hsu's words. As the fore part of the vehicle had gone too far off the Ladle Curve and the road was narrow, it, of course, could not turn round. He walked over close to the port-hole and shouted to Chen Wen-kuei:

"Go back a little. . . . All right! Turn 30 degrees to the left! Take your time! Fine! Look straight at my luminous marker. Go ahead slowly."

The tall, big body of Yang Ah-ju was doubled up, forming an arc, as though he were looking for something on the ground. He slowly groped his way in the gloom. At one time he stamped the ground with his feet, and at another, measured

the distance in slow paces, for fear they might come upon some washouts or shell craters. In his right hand he was holding the luminous marker, on the surface of which gleamed a faint green phosphorescent light.

"Where is it? I can't see!" Chen Wen-kuei cried.

"It's here!" Yang Ah-ju wiped away the raindrops on his marker and covered the upper edge of it with his left hand. "Can you see now?"

"Yes, yes!" Chen Wen-kuei drew a long breath. He pulled the left steering-rod as the dim light moved to the left. When the shimmer moved to the right, he made a right turn. Thus, the tank crawled along the S-shaped road like a baby learning to walk. The tankmen did not mind going ahead slowly. They understood that speed was out of the question. At the moment they were all worrying only about the safety of the platoon leader, for outside there was heavy artillery fire, and it was indeed very dangerous.

"Platoon Leader, I can make it now, you may get in," said Chen Wen-kuei.

"I'll go a bit farther, till we've turned round that little curve over there. . . ." No sooner had he finished speaking than a brilliant flash burst not far away, followed instantly by the boom of an explosion. Yang Ah-ju fell down in front of the tank, feeling as if someone had given him a heavy blow on the back. Grinding his teeth, he scrambled up with much difficulty. He continued guiding the tank till it made the curve and then he got in. Turning on the lamp in the tank, he found a big clump of dirt on his back.

The tank continued crawling along roaring into the pitch black rainy night, approaching step by step the position for launching the attack. Yang Ah-ju gradually felt at ease in his mind. He stooped to inquire of the chief gunner:

"Do you see any movement of the three enemy tanks?"

"Just now indistinctly I have seen three series of red signal flares, falling on Sokhyondong North Mountain. It is probable

that the enemy are beginning a counter-attack against our attacking forces."

"I am sure we'll reduce the damn things, all three, to scrap iron tomorrow night."

"I have complete confidence in destroying them only if we can get our tank into position."

As Yang Ah-ju was about to say a few words to encourage him, the tank took to rocking so terribly that he was almost thrown from his leather-cushioned seat. He asked in surprise,

"Chen Wen-kuei, what's the matter?"

"Very bad! There's a large crater on the right side!"

"Swing left, make a dash . . . dash upward!" Perspiring profusely all over, Yang Ah-ju had the presentiment that the tank was now in a critical position.

Chen Wen-kuei pushed back the left steering-rod, putting the engine into high gear. The engine roared for a moment, the tank made an upward jump, with half of its hull tilted back. Immediately it jerked down again, shaking for a few moments and then it came to a halt. It could neither advance nor retreat.

The tankmen climbed out of the vehicle one after another. When Yang Ah-ju turned his flashlight, carefully wrapped in a white cloth, on the caterpillar-belt, he was stunned. He could not utter a word for quite a while. The tank had mired in an enormous crater measuring about two men's shoulders in width, with its fender hitting against the ground.

Yang Ah-ju inspected the terrain all around the tank. Beside the vehicle were many mounds. Along the left side were hill slopes and on the right there was a shallow pond. A chestnut tree with its crest blasted off stood beside the pond. On the basis of these observations, he knew at once that it was only 100 metres or so to the position for attack! "It's too bad, indeed. The tank broke down just at the moment when we are about to reach our destination," he thought to himself. "As the road has been difficult for the tank to lumber along, it will be even more difficult for a tractor to come over. Many

parts of the road-bed have already been demolished under the weight of our heavy machine. Other tanks will be unable to come to our rescue. What is to be done?"

"There is no other way. We must not waste any time in rescuing our tank." Yang Ah-ju said excitedly, raising his thick eyebrows.

The rain had slackened a little. He organized the crew and divided the work among them. The first thing to do was to excavate a few dug-outs along the hill slopes to serve as shelters against enemy shells. Then they tried to lay some logs beneath the tank and scoop out the earth which was both wet and slimy. The dirt caked on the round shovels and was too sticky to be thrown off, so they simply put aside the shovels and scooped out the slime with both hands.

After midnight, the rescuing work was still not successful. Yang Ah-ju studied the situation further. The position of the tank was extremely unfavourable. The terrain around was flat, without any shelter. The tank was located about 2,400 metres from the main peak of Height 346.6, and could be seen clearly in the daytime. If it were discovered by the enemy, it would certainly be demolished, and thus forestall the fulfilment of their own mission. He hurriedly jumped into the tank, hooked up the radio transmitter and got in touch with the command post.

"Peking, Peking! This is Tientsin calling, Tientsin calling. At position No. 5 our tank has mired!" With this last sentence, his cheeks burned.

Through the receiver came the commanding officer's voice: "Tientsin, Tientsin, this is Peking calling. Please answer my question: Can you shoot with your guns? Can you shoot with your guns?"

"Yes, we can! We can!" There was great relief in Yang's voice.

"Tientsin, Tientsin! Dress it up at once, wait for further orders!"

"All right, all right! We shall do so immediately!"

Yang Ah-ju sprang out of the vehicle. He directed the tankmen: "Camouflage the tank right away!"

They all dispersed straightway. Some of them shovelled off sod to cover the armour plate, the turret and the fire-proof cover. Others scratched up handfuls of yellow mud to daub the gun barrel. Having found some tree branches and rattan at the base of a steep precipice, Hsu Shih-teh had them stuck onto the tank and fastened with ropes to prevent them from being torn away by enemy bombardment. In order to disguise the vehicle as a mound of earth, Hsu Chih-chiang turned the gun barrel to the back of the tank to make it look like a log lying against the mound. The holes dug during the rescuing work and the marks left by the pressure of the tank treads were all smoothed over by shovels. Clumps of grass were planted on the ground to conceal all traces.

Day began to break. Yang Ah-ju asked the crew men to get into the tank for a rest. Outside, artillery fire was raging ferociously on Sokhyondong North Mountain and rain in a steady downpour was splashing annoyingly in the air and on the ground.

* * *

A streak of greyish white light, shooting through the machine-gun loop-hole into the tank, so startled the radio operator, Hsu Shih-teh, that he could not but open his drowsy eyes. He found the platoon leader and Chen Wen-kuei both gone. "Could they have got out to save the tank?" he thought, throwing open the port-hole and poking out his head. He was right. There they were, actually trying to get the tank out of the mire.

"Don't step out. Listen carefully for the calls from the command post."

The platoon leader's shout awakened Hsu Chih-chiang and Shih Hung-shan, who were both leaning on the ammunition boxes snoring.

"What's the matter?" Hsu Chih-chiang asked Hsu Shih-teh.

"Nothing," muttered Hsu Shih-teh. "The platoon leader and Chen Wen-kuei are both ill. . . . Yet they are busy salvaging the tank themselves. And they made us take a rest!"

" 'The tank, the tank. . . and our duty.' That's what they always have in mind," said Hsu Chih-chiang with a sigh. "We are to blame! We fall asleep as soon as we lie on our backs."

Yang Ah-ju, nicknamed the "Iron Man" by Regimental Political Commissar Hsi in praise of him, certainly enjoyed very high repute in the whole regiment. No hardships ever made him flinch in the least, no difficult task ever daunted him; he possessed that kind of fortitude especially in battle. To begin with, in the bygone days of 1947, it was he who, when surrounded by the Kuomintang bandit army in the campaign at Mengliangkang, Shantung Province, got the wounded moved to places of safety single-handed, also carrying with him a newly-captured heavy machine-gun. Then in March 1953, leading the crew of Tank "217," he destroyed quite a few enemy field pieces and more than a dozen pillboxes, the whole crew of his tank winning a second-class merit — all this being done under heavy enemy gunfire. Just a few days ago, limping with calluses on his feet, he finished building the road in this marshy ground together with the infantrymen. With hardly any rest at all, he then took his men out reconnoitring for three nights; his calluses became swollen with pus as a result. But he insisted on taking up his combat duties and commanding Tank "215." So that his comrades might not worry about him, he always tried his best to walk along steadily.

Nothing could hold Hsu Chih-chiang back any longer. He crept out to the right side of the tank, where Platoon Leader Yang, Chen Wen-kuei and four sappers were propping up the caterpillar-belts with stones. They were all mud, some with clothes badly torn, others with face and hands dripping blood as a result of wounds from shell splinters or sharp rocks. In a muddy pool crawled Chen Wen-kuei, his trembling hands

forcing stones into place under the caterpillar-belts. Hastily Hsu Chih-chiang came over on all fours, asking concernedly:

"Suffering from malaria, Comrade Chen Wen-kuei? Go to lie down at once. Let me do it."

"No, no!" was the reply. "Malaria means nothing to me."

When not sick Chen Wen-kuei had a full, round, ruddy face; now, however, pain was written all over his yellow, wrinkled, hollow cheeks and sunken eyes. Still he would not leave the salvaging work though Hsu Chih-chiang strongly advised him to do so. Softly he said to Hsu, "Lower your voice so as not to let our platoon leader hear it. Just think: with our tank stuck here, how can I bear to lie down even if my ailment should get worse?"

"You've got to, even if you can't," said Hsu raising his voice as if for the platoon leader to hear. "You know you are ill." On hearing Hsu's words, Yang Ah-ju, lying half under the tank busily inserting stones in place, pulled himself out at once and sternly said, "Get into the tank quick, Chen Wen-kuei! The tank is precious, but man is more so. It can't go without a driver. . . . We've urged you many times. Why don't you leave?"

Glancing at Hsu Chih-chiang, Chen Wen-kuei seemed to say: You fellows are making a big fuss about nothing.

Chen Wen-kuei, however, crept slowly into the tank. He had hardly seated himself when Hsu Shih-teh urged him to lie down, saying, "Stretch out on that box for a while. Your chill is very severe."

"Never mind, it's better for me to sit here," replied Chen Wen-kuei making quite an effort to utter these few words, while folding his arms across his chest. "Do you remember what the comrades of the delegation which came from our motherland to bring us greetings said to us, Hsu Shih-teh?"

"Certainly!" answered Hsu with a smile. "What? You want me to repeat it? Very well. Just listen. . . . Ah! What's the matter, Chen Wen-kuei? Is it a headache?"

"No, no," denied Chen Wen-kuei, supporting his head with both hands, his voice faltering. "I'm ashamed to say I'm far from having lived up to what our countrymen told us. . . . After meetings and pleadings we succeeded at last in being given this task of destroying the American tanks. Yet I was so careless as to let our own tank get mired. Had I only got out more often to look around, it wouldn't have. . . ."

Then after a pause he continued with still greater concern, "Our infantry wants us to knock out the enemy tanks tonight. What if we can't get our tank ready?"

"Our superiors have told us to wait for orders. Probably we shall fire right from this spot. We have an open space here and it won't make much difference for us to fire from this place."

"Quiet! Listen!" said Hsu Shih-teh holding the earphone in his helmet with one hand and waving to Chen with the other. The next moment, he hurriedly crept out shouting:

"Platoon Leader, the command post wants you on the phone."

Yang Ah-ju climbed in, not stopping to wipe his muddy hands. Inserting the plug at the end of his helmet into the radio set, he shouted, "Peking, Peking. This is Tientsin! Waiting for your order! . . . Yes, yes! I see! . . . Please rest assured. We'll certainly eat the wild boar!" His face shone with delight as well as tension.

"Platoon Leader, are we to fire?" Hsu Chih-chiang, stepping in, asked eagerly as soon as Yang Ah-ju had finished talking.

"Yes! Our chief has sanctioned our firing right from this spot," answered Yang Ah-ju beaming all over. "We are expected to wipe out the enemy tanks before nine tonight. . . . Our chief has added that he'll recommend us for merit if we fight well!"

"Anything mentioned about that red flag?" asked Hsu Shih-teh fixing his round eyes directly on Yang. "The red

flag brought by the delegation from our motherland, the one with a peace dove embroidered in the upper left corner!"

The mention of the red flag at once took the tankmen back to the spring of that year, when the delegation from the motherland was visiting and entertaining this tank detachment. On parting, those dear people most solemnly handed a red flag to the commanding officer of the unit, saying, "On behalf of the people in our motherland, please present this flag to the tank that puts up the best fight. . . . All the people at home are waiting for this most significant news." Since then, the tankmen's hearts had been attracted towards this red flag.

"Our chief didn't mention it," replied Yang Ah-ju glancing over all the men. "That doesn't matter. So long as we fight well we don't have to worry about the red flag's not flying on our tank. It's all up to you. Hsu Chih-chiang, what have you got to say?"

"I pledge I can destroy those three 'iron tortoises' and reduce them to scrap iron. But if I can't hit. . . ."

"No! You must say 'can,' never say 'can't,'" Yang Ah-ju corrected Hsu Chih-chiang. "It would mean you couldn't guarantee the matter in hand, if you should say 'can't hit.'"

Hiding his embarrassment in a smile, Hsu Chih-chiang assured all, "I can."

"Determine your target right away, and give me your calculations in writing. Take your aim most carefully. You mustn't be a hair's breadth off the mark." Yang Ah-ju knew Hsu Chih-chiang quite well. With pleasant features and a well-proportioned figure, this junior middle school graduate and Youth League member was one of the comparatively outstanding chief gunners of the whole company. While learning gunnery in his motherland, he made the best record. In military training he could hit various targets almost three out of three. Several times shooting at night under flares, he scored in all four trials. On the 26th of the last month, with a total of 35 shells fired, he destroyed one enemy tank, two command posts, three

field guns and eleven firing positions. There was however one shortcoming in Hsu Chih-chiang: he was not careful enough sometimes. Therefore, Yang Ah-ju made it a point to remind him of this.

Staring at Height 346.6 with both eyes glued to the periscope, Yang Ah-ju found the three enemy tanks clearly visible on the main peak of the Height. They were facing Sokhyon-dong North Mountain, discharging shells in a series of "Boom, boom, boom!" Fortunately their sides were exposed to our tank. Seeing the five-pointed star in brilliant white on the enemy tank turrets, Yang Ah-ju swore, "Bah! So you have placed yourselves right in position to be knocked out. Your days are numbered!" And he thought to himself: "There couldn't be a better view of our targets. If we get our bearings and determine our firing position during the daytime, we can turn our gun around quickly at dusk and aim accurately at our objective. So thinking he said to Hsu Chih-chiang:

"Get your bearings first. Make precise observations through your binoculars. . . . Look to the left in front of you. There's a lone umbrella-shaped tree. It may serve as an alignment point for your bearings."

Hsu Chih-chiang looked through his aiming sight, nodded and answered, "All right. Let me climb out to get my orientation. I can't see well inside here." Then he scrambled out of the tank. . . .

By dusk the greyish white streak of light that pierced into the loop-holes of the tank had gradually darkened. Having contacted the command post, Yang Ah-ju immediately issued orders to do away with the camouflage and turn round the gun. There was at once a tense atmosphere in the tank. Allocated to their respective posts the five men felt their hearts throb with joy. After switching on the direction gears Hsu Chih-chiang slowly swung the turret around; then, upon manipulating the gear handle, he elevated the gun muzzle. All the mechanism of the tank gun seemed exceptionally smooth-running that day. He found everything so easy to operate as

to add considerably to his confidence. Outside everything was wrapped in a sheet of grey and it was drizzling. All that he could make out of the mountain peak was an arc of deep grey, now more discernible, now less so. At this point the platoon leader asked him:

"Are you on-target?"

"I can see only an outline of the main peak, but not any tanks!" he answered with some anxiety.

"Don't be disturbed. Let me get out and see." As Yang Ah-ju stuck his head out of the hatch, he found clumps of dirt and splinters from explosions of enemy gunfire on the steel plates of the tank. After a while he drew back his head saying, "The bearing is correct on the whole. Get ready to fire."

Shih Hung-shan, the deputy chief gunner and ammunition man, held the shells in readiness; Hsu Chih-chiang, the chief gunner, grasped the elevating and direction gears; Yang Ah-ju was staring steadfastly into the front.

"Boo-oom!" Flames flashed from the American tank guns on Height 346.6. The enemy were again firing in the direction of Sokhyondong North Mountain. Taking advantage of the flash, Hsu Chih-chiang speedily aimed his gun at the American tanks. Almost with a hurrah he cried out:

"Take aim!"

"Armour-piercing shells!"

The breechblock closed with a snap. "Hail, armour-piercing shells!" shouted Shih Hung-shan.

"Boo-oom!" The tank seemed to take a leap forward, discharging a gun-flash through the gun muzzle.

Yang Ah-ju saw the shell strike a greenish streak of light on the American tank only to vanish to the upper left in a flash. Hastily he shouted, "Ricochet! Aim lower. Fire!"

Hsu Chih-chiang was in a state of high tension at that time, yet his heart-strings seemed to strike up a subtle tune of harmony sending a flood of joy over him. The ricochetting shell accounted for a hit, only a little too high; it struck the tank's

turret. Slightly turning the elevating gear, he pressed the "electric primer" with the forefinger of his right hand. "Bo-o-o-m!" a red gun-flash like a rocket lodged itself right in the belly of the enemy tank.

"A good hit! One more like that!"

Hardly had Yang Ah-ju's jubilant cry been uttered when another ball of fire flew across. In the twinkling of an eye the enemy tank burst into full flame. Tinging red not only the sullen rainy night scene but also all the nearby peaks and ranges, large and small, the light revealed the forms of the two other "iron tortoises."

As Hsu Chih-chiang was turning his gun muzzle round to aim at the second tank, the two other enemy tanks hurriedly shifted their guns to retaliate. Pounding again and again, their armour-piercing shells, emitting streaks of red light, fell on the earth in front of Tank "215." Enemy mortar batteries also concentrated bombardment on Tank "215." One shot landing on the turret sent the tank into a violent quiver, with numerous sparks entering by the vents, some spattering Hsu Chih-chiang's face — smarting as they struck. Great indignation surged up from the bottom of his heart. He took aim at the very moment when the enemy tank's gun was firing; the flash enabled him to aim more accurately. He delivered five armour-piercing shells in succession, cursing angrily, "See if you can fire any more!" The next moment the second enemy tank burst into flames.

Pulling out his handkerchief from the pocket of his service uniform, Shih Hung-shan offered it to the chief gunner to wipe off his perspiration. Speedily Hsu Chih-chiang brought the gun round to aim at the third tank; Shih Hung-shan forced the shell down into the breech and then closed the breechblock.

Instantly the third enemy tank received three hits and became silent. But it did not catch fire.

"Is it playing possum? Don't quit. Three more shots!"

The shells hit the tank, still there was no outburst of flame. Really perplexing!

"Stop firing for a while. Watch it closely. Give it a good beating if it makes any noise."

That tank never stirred, while rifle fire at Sokhyondong North Mountain went on intermittently. Only the desultory shelling by enemy mortars was still "whining" as if to announce some death.

"Is the time past?" Hsu Chih-chiang asked the platoon leader.

"Thirty-odd seconds to scheduled time," said Yang Ah-ju looking at his wrist watch.

As a result of the firing, the tank became filled with gas fumes which, however, could not spoil the tankmen's hearty talk and laughter.

"Platoon Leader, it's high time we wrote those comrades of the delegation from our motherland," said Hsu Shih-teh inclining his head and smiling broadly. "Didn't they tell us to report to them as soon as we wipe out an enemy tank? I think we'll write in full how our platoon leader has directed operations, and how our chief gunner has fired."

"Mention should be made of everybody," said Hsu Chih-chiang. "Everybody has done his part in destroying these three enemy tanks. It couldn't have been done with anyone absent."

"I agree to writing those comrades of the delegation. But what about me? About my bringing the tank into the quagmire? . . ." queried Chen Wen-kuei thoughtfully. "We are exposed as a target and the enemy will soon retaliate with their volleys. What shall we do now?"

* * *

Chen Wen-kuei's words were like a gust of wind which soon swept away the smiles from every face. Indeed, the tank was now completely exposed to the enemy, and it was unable to move. Everyone began to cudgel his brains in

solemn silence, trying to find some way to protect the armoured vehicle. The heart of every tankman beat heavily in unison with the ticking of his wrist watch.

"Platoon Leader," said Chen Wen-kuei in a drawling tone, "the enemy often find us driving away immediately after firing. They usually listen to the sound of our motor and then level their guns at us. Since we can't drive away now, let's start the engine where we are, and make the motor sound very loud at first, and then cut down the noise little by little; it would seem as if we were really going away. Let us puzzle them!"

The tankmen all grew very excited over this idea.

"Excellent!" exclaimed Yang Ah-ju, "let's start the engine where we are!"

Chen Wen-kuei set the motor going, putting it into high gear and the engine began to give out a tremendous roar. Every man now pressed his ear to the small machine-gun loop-holes to listen. In an instant, deafening artillery bombardment came thundering behind the tank; but in a short while it began to shift farther and farther away. In the tank, the men all laughed heartily, Hsu Shih-teh being the one who laughed most loudly, chuckling and saying, "They really think we've gone; so they 'salute us farewell'!" Refraining from showing his inner excitement, Chen Wen-kuei regulated the engine as he had planned.

The enemy had thrown in three artillery batteries to bombard along the so-called "retreating path of the tank" for a distance of more than two *li*, before they came to a stop. But, as a matter of fact, Tank "215" remained where it had been without moving an inch.

It was already midnight when the crew finished camouflaging the tank.

The enemy's sporadic gunfire had stopped, nor was there any shooting from Sokhyondong North Mountain. But it began to rain heavily and the monotonous downpour lulled all the tired tankmen to their dreams.

Leaning upon the leather cushion, Yang Ah-ju was unable to sleep. Many things were turning round in his mind, while his calluses pained him so as if a needle were pricking his heart. Switching on the light, he untied the mud-stained bandage and turned up the sole of his foot to have a look. Under the dim yellowish light, he found that a thick layer of sand and mud had filled the lesion, which went as deep as the length of his toe. He soon opened a new first-aid pack and, in spite of the pain, squeezed out the bloody pus, cleaned the wound, and dressed his foot again.

All the other comrades were fast asleep, the noise of snoring going round and round in the tank. Looking at the tired faces of his fighting comrades, Yang Ah-ju was much moved and a sense of warm love welled up in his heart. Gently he took Hsu Shih-teh's right arm hanging at his side and rested it on his breast so that he might sleep more comfortably. Then, he turned off the light and half opened the port-hole and the hatch to let some fresh air into the hot, stuffy tank — every act done with the care of a solicitous grandmother, so as not to awaken those asleep.

It was past midnight when fatigue began to overcome him. However, to prevent himself from falling asleep, he hummed the tune he liked best. It was a song that he learned from his folks during his childhood in his native village when he was working for a landlord as a hired labourer.

All of a sudden, however, a voice was shouting outside, "215! 215!"

Yang Ah-ju quietly poked his head out. It was the four sappers again.

"The commanding officer has instructed us to rescue the tank immediately," said the leader of the team. "He said there might be some new assignment."

"Wonderful!" exclaimed Yang Ah-ju. Fatigue seemed to leave him all at once.

Now again he was crawling in the muddy water to help the four comrades rescue the tank. The rain had stopped,

and the cold wind was blowing in gusts. . . . The light of the early morning gradually brightened the dark sky, and masses of black clouds were rolling westward. The sun's rays began to shoot through the clouds, illumining the eastern sky and painting it in exquisite colours. Ah! It would be a fine day! How the men fighting in incessant heavy rains hoped for and would welcome a fine day! Nevertheless, Yang Ah-ju's mind was beclouded with worries. Once it cleared, the enemy's artillery observation post would certainly proceed to make a close examination of this tract of marshy land, and their planes would also come reconnoitring.

In a little while, buzzing sounds were heard overhead, and several enemy planes appeared. He advised the four sappers to hide themselves in the dug-out, while he himself, after carefully inspecting the camouflage, crawled into the tank. The men inside all crowded spontaneously to the periscope to see what was happening. Three enemy jet planes, dipping their wings, were circling above them; it looked as if they were searching for something.

Suddenly, numerous shells exploded around the enemy planes, near the nose, then the tail; near the right, then the left wings. These explosions were chasing the planes, which were trying hard to escape.

"Our ack-ack guns have come to reinforce us!" shouted Hsu Shih-teh joyfully. "They are shooting just wonderfully! The planes are being driven into the clouds. Just listen to their drone! They sound exactly like mosquitoes wailing over their few remaining days in the late autumn!"

Bo-o-m! Bo-o-m! Several bombs dropped not far from the left side of the tank, raising columns of black smoke. Rocks and stones dashed and cracked against the tank, while the men inside became so tense that they spoke not a word, fearing that the tank might be discovered. But when they listened again, the enemy planes had fled.

"The enemy will not overlook this place," said Yang Ah-ju to Hsu Shih-teh, "you are small and nimble; go out and

see if the tank is still adequately camouflaged, for there should not be the slightest trace of our tank visible."

In a short while, Hsu Shih-teh crawled back in, saying wittily, "Really funny! The bombs have scratched away the old mud but splashed on new patches. Aha! they've given our tank a brand-new camouflage!"

"Have the branches fallen off?"

"Only a few are missing, but some flowers have been added," said Hsu Shih-teh, opening his right palm to show two wonderfully attractive red blossoms. "How fresh and charming they look! We can scarcely find such lovely flowers even when we want to adorn our tank at home!"

The tankmen all turned to stare at the red flowers, each of which had six petals dotted with pearl-like drops of water and streaks of mud. They wondered how such flowers could have got on to their tank. Did they themselves put them there unawares during the camouflaging the night before? Or was it the four sappers who had stuck them on? Or they might have been carried there with the mud from the explosions of enemy bombs! . . . The fact was that each of these guesses might be right, but none could be taken as absolutely certain.

"Hsu Shih-teh," said Hsu Chih-chiang, voicing what all the others had in mind, "keep these blossoms and send them to our dear compatriots at home. It's of great significance to present such flowers to them!"

A series of violent explosions interrupted the pleasant conversation of the tankmen. Looking out, Yang Ah-ju saw that columns of dark thick smoke rose all around, draping the tank like a veil of black fog. The enemy's artillery began the bombardment again, and the tank was shaking most violently. The hot sun shone down like a ball of fire, while the air within the tank grew thinner and thinner, the stuffiness becoming more and more unbearable. The smoke and fumes from the enemy bombardment crept in through every small chink and hole, breathing became difficult. Soon, the tankmen all grew

dizzy and thirsty. The only way out under such circumstances was to switch on the electric fan. But electricity was a very important thing to the tank; without electricity it could not move, nor could its gun operate. Moreover, there was but little power left in the battery. So all the tankmen would rather endure physical discomfort than make any request for the fan. Yang Ah-ju, seeing that all his comrades had got very dizzy, attempted several times to switch on the fan; but each time he was prevailed upon by the words of his comrades: "Platoon Leader, electricity is vital for the tank. Think of some other ways, we can stand the suffering. But please don't touch the fan!"

The only thing that could be done now was to open the port-hole quickly for a moment during an interval of the enemy's bombardment so as to let in a little fresh air. Even so the inside of the tank was hot as a furnace, scorching every tankman. Later, as the bombardment went on incessantly, the men even had to shut the port-hole altogether, fearing that the shell splinters might fly in and do damage. As a result, there was not enough air for the crew inside. Time passed by, minute by minute. Chen Wen-kuei's face grew terribly pale. Leaning upon the back of the driver's seat, he was gasping for breath. Hsu Shih-teh quickly put a few aromatic pills into his mouth. Hsu Chih-chiang, the chief gunner, got so dizzy that he could hardly support himself, but he managed to move his face near to the gun barrel to get a whiff of fresh air. Shih Hung-shan began to vomit; he really could not stand it any longer, and made this request: "Platoon Leader, I am feeling awful. Let me go out of the tank, please!" Yang Ah-ju was suffering in the same manner, the heat and stuffiness having almost suffocated him; yet he could not risk going out, nor could he let his comrades do so. He pulled Shih Hung-shan over to the gun barrel, telling him to breathe some fresh air.

Through the wireless, Yang Ah-ju finally reported the situation to the command post. The commanding officer there

was much concerned about these tankmen, so he comforted them, saying, "Under such circumstances, you may do as you think best; you may let two men remain, while the rest go to the shelter." To Yang Ah-ju, these words were more encouraging than the breathing of fresh air. But he felt it difficult to ask his comrades to leave the tank. Pushing back his helmet a little, he said in a solemn, low voice, "Comrades, our commander wished us good health and congratulated us on our success last night. . . . Now, Shih Hung-shan and I will stay here; the rest of you may go outside to the shelter."

The tankmen recovering from their dizziness, got excited over the platoon leader's words. Go to the shelter? How could they leave the tank under such circumstances, especially at this very moment of the battle? Chen Wen-kuei became quite worried and, seizing the steering-rod, pleaded, "Platoon Leader, I'm the driver. The tank's my home. Wherever it is, I am with it!"

Hsu Shih-teh was particularly anxious about the matter, shouting as if he were quarrelling with someone, "Platoon Leader, we've all sworn at the joint meeting of the Party members and the Youth League members that we should unite as one man and work whole-heartedly together to overcome all hardships; so we can't leave the tank!"

Such sentiments, profound and sincere, moved Yang Ah-ju greatly. Of course, the tank was important, and the friendship precious; yet he couldn't bear to see his comrades all faint. So he persuaded, "Our commanding officer is very much concerned about us. If we keep fewer men in the tank, the air will become better. So go out to rest for a while first, and when the enemy stop shelling, you may come back again."

"Platoon Leader," said Hsu Chih-chiang, "we can't go out, not until the enemy bombardment slackens. But once it lets up, we can immediately push open the port-hole to let in some fresh air; so let's stay here to the end! It is you who often say that the crew, the indomitable crew, is the pillar of the

tank. However bad the air may be, we all can stand it, I believe! It can't suffocate us!"

"We all can stand it!" exclaimed Chen Wen-kuei and Hsu Shih-teh together.

Yang Ah-ju was much inspired by the fortitude of his men; he was overjoyed at their fine spirit. He thought: "According to the commander's instruction we may do as the situation demands. Now there are indications that the enemy's bombardment may not last long. The tankmen's morale is still high; they can stand all hardships. Well, under such circumstances, I'll request the commander to let us remain in the tank. . . ." Thinking thus, he put on his helmet and plugged the earphones into the radio set.

* * *

The enemy's artillery bombardment gradually died out; the port-hole and the hatch of the tank remained half open. The tankmen were now fully recovered. But soon the firing of tank guns was heard again coming from Height 346.6. Yang Ah-ju looked through the periscope, and there in place of the battered enemy tanks stood two new dark-green ones at the east and the west sides of the main peak. Their gun muzzles, emitting black clouds of heavy smoke, were pointing to Sokhyondong North Mountain. Groups of helmeted enemy soldiers, so he noticed too, along the southwestern slopes of the mountain, were making attacks on our garrison troops.

"Ha, ha! Here come 'provisions' for our 'iron horse' again," Hsu Shih-teh cried out in high spirits. "Platoon Leader, let's destroy these two tanks. Then the red flag will surely be ours!"

"Certainly, we must do so. How can we suffer ourselves to see them shoot at our own infantry comrades, but we haven't got the order to fire." Yang replied while making observations of the enemy troops' movements.

"Why can't we ask for this order from the command post!" said Hsu Chih-chiang opening the breechblock and taking

hold of the direction gear. "I surely will finish the two devils in five minutes if I get the order."

"Be patient! Our command post has overall plans. We will fight, but we don't necessarily fire during the daytime. Get ready and wait for orders."

"If we fire again, may I take Hsu Chih-chiang's place?" asked Shih Hung-shan in earnest. "He is tired out. I am sure I can blast those two 'iron tortoises' to pieces."

Platoon Leader Yang spoke to Hsu Chih-chiang in a manner as though to consult him, "What do you say to that, chief gunner? Do you agree?"

"Yes, Comrade Shih Hung-shan is as good in marksmanship as I am. A few days ago he scored direct hits in shelling the enemy firing positions," Hsu Chih-chiang answered with a warm smile. Then Shih Hung-shan said modestly, his thin face glowing, "I need your help, though."

"Platoon Leader Yang," Hsu Shih-teh shouted, "the commander asks you to go to the command post."

It was not until a few hours later that Yang Ah-ju came back. The tankmen learned from his smiling face that they got what they wanted. However, they still put to him this question: "Has the commander approved of our taking action?"

"Yes," Yang replied, wiping the sweat from his forehead while his worn-out face brightened.

"When are we to open fire then?"

"9 o'clock tomorrow night."

"What a long time to wait!" Hsu Chih-chiang remarked, much surprised.

But Yang said in return: "We don't wait for time, but want to race with time in getting the tank out of the mire to move it to a new position ready for action. Our chief said that the battle last night was excellent. The enemy commander yelled over the radio, 'Damn it. Two tanks on fire! The other one, useless. . . .' Besides, I have something for you here." From his pocket Yang then took out a leaflet, printed in big red characters, "This is the *Victory News Bulletin* issued by

the joint command post of the infantry, artillery and tank forces. Now Hsu Shih-teh, you read for us."

"How fast the bulletin comes out! The thing happened only last night and is already in the bulletin today," Hsu Shih-teh remarked while taking the leaflet to read. "The headline is: Sudden Attack by Single Tank — Tank '215' destroyed three enemy tanks! The article says: Though the tank was stuck in the mud, our brave tankmen, disregarding all danger, opened fire on scheduled time. . . . Tank '215' vigorously supported the garrison forces at Sokhyondong North Mountain. It is hoped that the tank crew will continue to exert their best and win more merits by dealing heavy blows to the U.S. imperialists and the Syngman Rhee bandits who are sabotaging the peace talks. . . ."

"I want to tell you another piece of good news," Yang Ah-ju said excitedly after Hsu Shih-teh finished reading.

"What good news? Tell us right away."

"There have been seven members of the cultural and art troupe, earnestly asking permission from the command post to come over and see us, but they have not been permitted to do so by our chief because of the fierce gunfire here. Finally the commanding officer told me to take them to visit Tank '216' where they sang some songs. How can we repay the goodwill and the concern of our commanding officers and comrades? The only thing for us to do is to get the tank out of the mire on time with the co-operation of the sappers, and to fight again in a new position."

Rain poured down that evening from a sky thickly covered with dark clouds. Some of the tankmen and sappers crawled on the ground to dig mud, some went farther afield to get big stones, some even waded across the flooded Ikgokchon River to obtain timber. Their faces were streaked with mud, while their hands were scratched by thorns and cut by fragments of enemy shells and jagged stones. They were almost entirely covered with a mixture of blood and mud. But no one ever said a word, as if talking would sap their strength.

. . . As soon as the rain stopped, it grew bright in the east. The mountain ranges, near and far, were enveloped in heavy fog, and looked like islands floating gently on the sea. Then the enemy's batteries fired on the marshy land again. After a whole night's excitement and hard labour the men were utterly tired out and aching all over. However, they all still persevered; the tankmen and sappers encouraged each other, none ever complaining of anything.

Another night came and gunfire lit up Sokhyondong North Mountain, with innumerable tongues of flame dancing in the air. Flying bullets whizzed, intermingled with explosions of hand-grenades. The two newly-arrived enemy tanks on Height 346.6 continuously shelled our garrison troops around Sokhyondong North Mountain. At this moment, Tank "215," after considerable shaking and bumping, came lumbering out of its quagmire pit triumphantly. All the tank crew and sappers, clapping their hands, jumped up for joy and embraced one another, not minding their dirty clothes and even forgetting the danger of enemy shells.

"Many thanks, comrades!" the tankmen said to the sappers.

"Not at all! We give you our best wishes; do a good job and smash the enemy tanks!"

"After this battle, let's celebrate our victory!"

Tank "215" now went roaring to a new firing position. Shih Hung-shan turned the gun-turret towards the front. Then he bent down to look through the sighting instrument at Height 346.6. The pale light of flares above the Height brought out the dark outlines of the enemy tanks which stood in exactly the same position as those previously damaged, with their sides facing our tank gun. It looked as if they were ready for the same fate.

Shih Hung-shan, aided by Hsu Chih-chiang in taking the bearings and determining the position, had the gun pointed at one enemy tank, and shouted out excitedly, "Aim!"

"Load armour-piercing shells — fire!"

The tank roared. Yang Ah-ju saw a ball of fire streak through the air in the arc of a rainbow and fly off to the left of the tank.

"Too much to the left! Turn a little bit to the right!"

As Shih was firing, he was dazed by the sudden flash of light and was unable to see the trajectory. On hearing the platoon leader's order, he turned the direction gear slightly towards the right and fired another shot. A red light flashed in the sky at once, and the shell kindled up a green streak of light as it glanced off on the right side of the enemy tank's turret and soon vanished.

"Ricochet! Make correction, fire again quickly!"

After adjusting his aim, Shih fired another three shells. Three flashes of fire flew in a series to lodge in the enemy tank which immediately burst into flame. He was so happy that he could not help crying out, "We've hit it!"

"Excellent!" Yang Ah-ju shouted, "get ready to knock out the second tank! Quick! Leave them no time to fire back."

Shih now found every part of the sighting instrument running unusually smoothly and easy to operate. But as he was taking aim, the second enemy tank had already opened fire. Red fire balls flying over the top of Tank "215," dazzled Shih's eyes. He knew that in this gun battle speed would count most. He fired three shells in succession towards the place where flames had burst out. Yang saw clearly that the first shot was too high, the second, too low, and the third, too much to the right.

"What's wrong with you, Shih? You missed all of them."

"I can only see the flames but not the tank," replied Shih very much confused.

"Be calm! Turn a little bit to the left, fire again in succession!"

Shih steadied himself. His fifth shot dealt a fatal blow to the "iron tortoise." Huge flames burst out on Height 346.6, turning the sky above into a mass of crimson.

* * *

It was now nightfall with all its twinkling little stars, when Tank "215" went rumbling along on its homeward trip.

The enemy long-range gunfire pressing after our tank had been silenced by our powerful artillery.

On the fender stood Yang Ah-ju and Hsu Chih-chiang, enjoying the night scenery and they were more than refreshed by the cooling breeze and invigorating air. Three sappers sat on the rear extension of the tank, chatting and laughing, their shadows together with the shadow of the tank reflected on the surface of the Ikgokchon River by the flares dropped by enemy night planes. It being a summer night right after rain, they were really enjoying a very pleasant ride. As to the road, it stretched on smooth enough, neither too dry nor too wet, with not even a speck of dust. Clank! Clank! went the caterpillar-belts, clattering along on the gravel-paved highway, like thousands of steeds galloping up a mountain path. The gushing of the torrent in the river combined with the thundering of the tank-motors swelled into a mighty volume of music, unrestrained in its vigour and resounding throughout the gorges.

Ever since the tank crept out of the bog, Chen Wen-kuei had been unable to restrain his thoughts of song and rejoicing. Those three days and nights in the stalled tank had been hard to bear; he had taken no food, and fainted several times from malaria and near suffocation. But now he was driving ahead, leaving all pain far, far behind.

"Got your harmonica, Hsu Shih-teh?" queried Chen Wen-kuei.

"Yes! Do you want to hear a tune?"

"A merry tune would be most welcome."

"Aren't you a bit down-hearted, eh?" said Hsu Shih-teh jokingly, winking at Chen Wen-kuei.

"When was all that! No more joking, my good brother!" answered Chen Wen-kuei somewhat embarrassed.

"Play 'The Tankmen's March,' Hsu Shih-teh!" cut in Hsu Chih-chiang, poking his head in from the outside. "We'll sing to your playing."

. . . . . .

In heavy armour, with mechanized weapons of war,
Our composite force of different arms, like an avalanche,
descends upon the foe;
With sappers to pave the way and artillery for cover,
We, aiming accurately, fight swiftly and fiercely.

Accompanying the singing inside the tank, a chorus broke forth outside it; the tank crew and sappers all sang together. To the tune of their powerful sonorous voices the tank rolled along by the banks of the Ikgokchon River. Their music was wafted through the night by the summer breeze and the rushing stream, drowning the sporadic gun shots and the wailful drone of enemy planes.

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